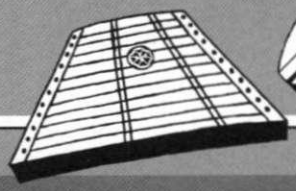
DULCIMER PLAYERS news



ISSN: 0098-3527

The Journal for Hammered and Fretted Dulcimer Enthusiasts Vol. 31, No. 1 ★ February 2005–April 2005 $6.00

In this issue...

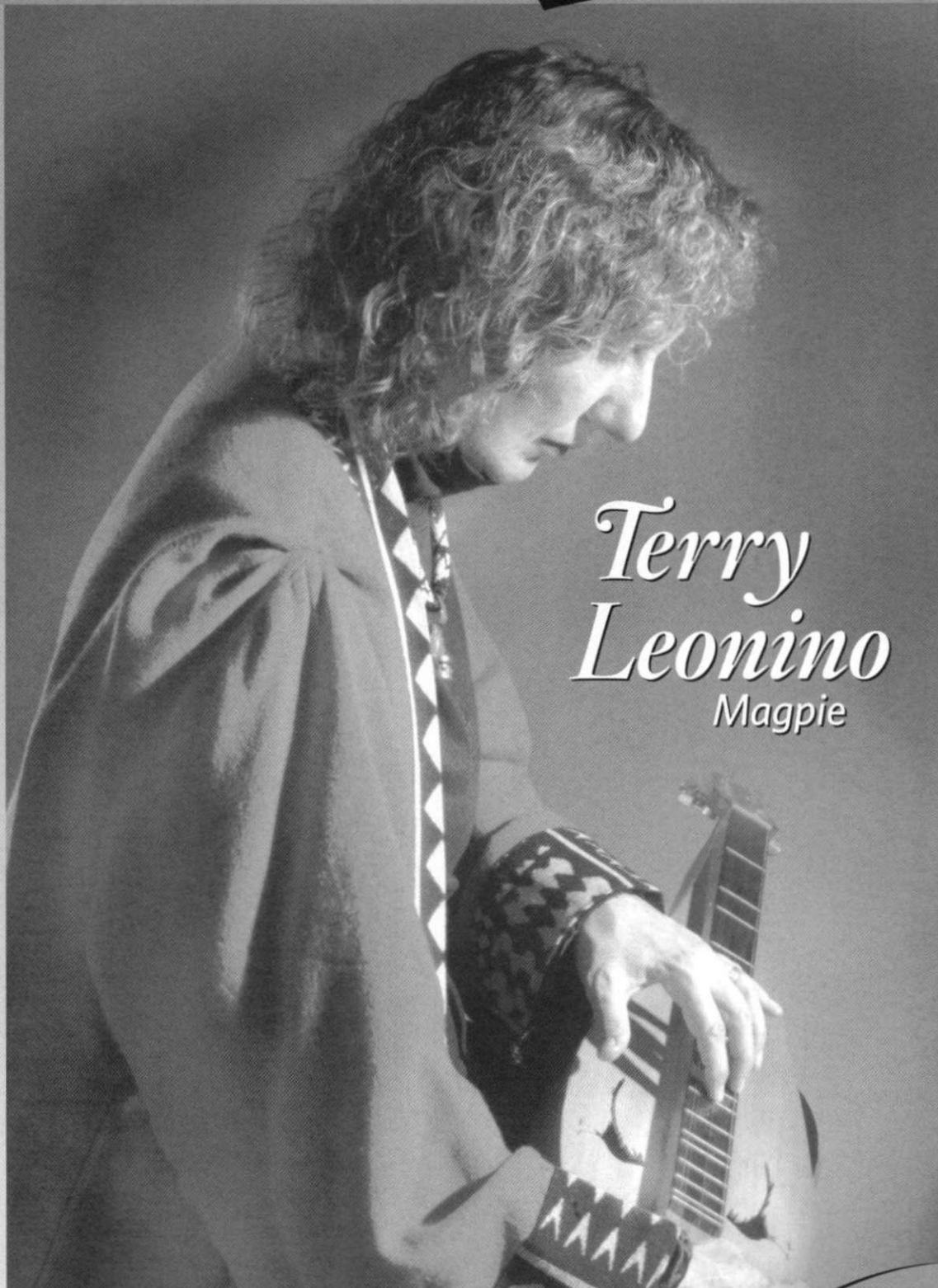
- ★ Dulcimers in Florida's School of Arts and Sciences
- ★ Jams . . . Staying Together
- ★ Practicing for Performances
- ★ John D. Tignor: Old-Time Kentucky Dulcimer Maker

Meet...

- ★ Roger Frood
- ★ Magpie

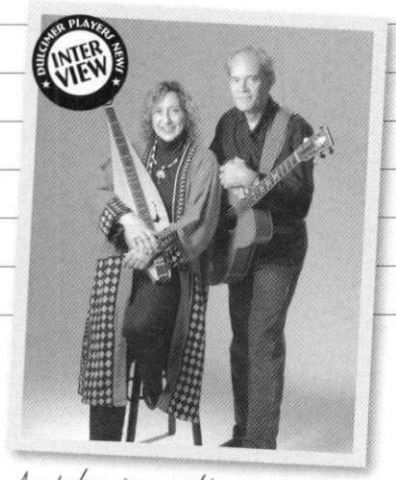
Plus

Music, reviews, events and more...

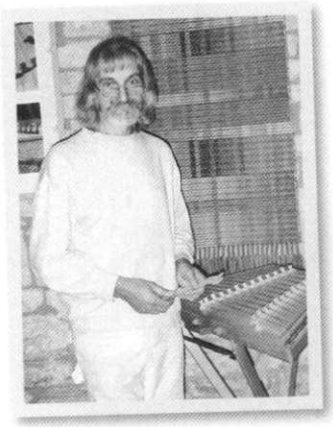


Contents

Dear Readers	1
News & Notes	2
Letters To Us	3
Dulcimer Clubs	4
Musical Reviews • Neal Walters	6
Events	9
Jams—Staying Together • Rob Downie	17
Youth Dulcimers: Kate Taluga and Florida's School of Arts and Sciences • Johnny Ray	19
Hot on Dulcimers—Roger Frood • Sheridan Hill	20
A Common Song • Carolyn Smith	24
An Interview With Magpie: Terry Leonino & Greg Artzner • Heidi Cerrigione	26
𝄞 Take Me Back to Harper's Ferry	28
The Art of Performing: There's Practice and There's Practice • Steve Schneider	34
MD Tales & Traditions: John D. Tignor: Old-Time Kentucky Dulcimer Maker • Ralph Lee Smith	38
The Music Archives • Sam Rizzetta	42
𝄞 Lullaby	43
𝄞 Jaybird	44
𝄞 Jaybird (Fretted Dulcimer Version)	44
𝄞 June Apple	45
What's New • Neal Walters	47
The Silver Chord	50
Advertiser Index	51
Unclassifieds	52



An Interview with Magpie, page 26.



Hot on Dulcimers—Roger Frood, page 20.

Youth Dulcimers, page 19.

Dulcimer Players News

Volume 31, Number 1
February 2005–April 2005

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ISSN: 0098-3527

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Mountain Dulcimer History • **Ralph Lee Smith**

Hammered Dulcimer History • **Paul Gifford**

What's New/Musical Reviews
Neal Walters

The Art of Performing • **Steve Schneider**

Youth Dulcimer • **Johnny Ray**

■

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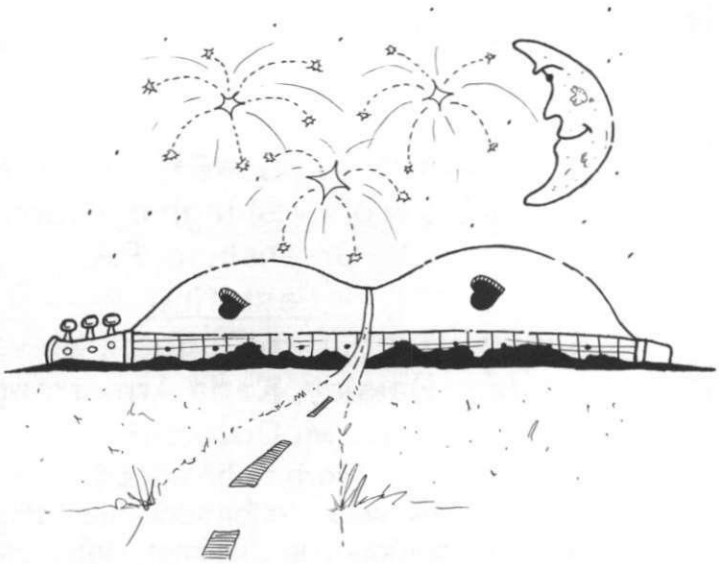
Founded in 1975 by Phillip Mason

The *Dulcimer Players News* is published four times each year. Issues are mailed (via 3rd class) to subscribers in mid-January, mid-April, mid-July and mid-October. Subscriptions in the United States are $24 per year, $45 for two years. Canada: $26 per year (Visa, MasterCard, US banks or international money orders only). Other countries (surface mail): $26 (US funds, US banks or international money orders only). Recent back issues are usually available.

Dear Readers



"And for auld lang syne, my dear, for auld lang syne…" I enjoy singing those words of friendship throughout the year, not just on December 31st. In this winter issue, the beginning of our 31st year, I want to remind you of music's embracing message by telling you two stories.

A few years ago I performed at First Night in Warrenton, Virginia. I finished my sets at 10:45 p.m. and started the forty-mile trip home. It was a beautiful clear night, and I enjoyed listening to a special edition of *A Prarie Home Companion* on the radio. The intent of the live broadcast was to celebrate the New Year in each of the US time zones. Along Rt. 7, heading west, I began crossing the Blue Ridge Mountains at Snicker's Gap, and realized it was midnight. Garrison Keillor said, "It's January 1st in the east," and the audience began to sing "Auld Lang Syne."

Just then, at the top of the mountain, I saw the First Night fireworks from Winchester, twenty miles away. Truly, I felt this was all happening just for me! A special gift wishing me growth and understanding and friendship in the new year. There are times, I'm sure, when someone said to you, "I needed a bit of music in my life today, and you were there." These are magical moments we never forget.

There was a musical moment I *wanted* to forget, and Garrison Keillor came through for me again. I'd worked at a craft fair demonstrating the hammered dulcimer, singing my heart out, and selling CDs. Person after person looked at the CDs and said, "Do you have any without the singing? Oh, your voice is fine; I just don't like vocals." To me the human voice, scratchy or sweet or in between, is a treasure. I cannot *not* sing! The Monday after the craft fair I was driving to Winchester, slightly down-hearted about my weekend, and turned on NPR. I recognized Garrison immediately. He was the guest at a National Press Club broadcast. Toward the end of the hour, someone asked about his interest in singing. "Why don't we *all* sing something?" Within minutes he had members of the press singing "Kumbaya"—in harmony. With a lump in my throat, I joined in!

You have your own moments, moments that have encouraged and enriched your musical life. But, as I said at the beginning of the letter, I want to remind you of something. Whether you're a beginner or more advanced dulcimist; whether you perform for concert audiences or for family and close friends, you share music's gift. You have brought the New Year throughout the year to more people than you can imagine. Thank you for your support in helping us continue to share *Dulcimer Players News* with all of our loyal readers.

Dulcimerrily,

Maddie MacNeil

NETWORKING

Closing dates for the May–July 2005 DPN
(To be mailed to subscribers in mid-April)

Information for News & Notes, Letters, Music Exchange, etc: Feb. 5th

Unclassified Ads: Feb. 5th

Display Ads: Feb. 5th (space reservation), Feb. 15th (camera-ready copy)

Ad Prices

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45¢ per word. 4 issues paid in advance without copy changes: 20% discount.

Display Ads:

1/12 page $35	1/6 page $70
1/4 page $105	1/3 page $140
1/2 page $200	Full page $400
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Contact us concerning multiple insertion discounts. Advertisers: Please be sure to mention which kind of dulcimer is featured on recordings.

For inquiries concerning interviews and articles, contact us for details and a style sheet. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome. For returns of manuscripts, photos, or artwork, please enclose a stamped envelope; otherwise DPN is not responsible for their eventual fate. The DPN reserves the right to edit all manuscripts for length and clarity. The opinions expressed therein are not necessarily those of the Dulcimer Players News.

Technical Dulcimer Questions
Sam Rizzetta
Rizzetta Music
PO Box 530
Inwood, WV 25428

Recordings and Books for Review
Neal Walters
12228 Hollowell Church Road
Greencastle, PA 17225

News and Notes, Letters, Events, Clubs
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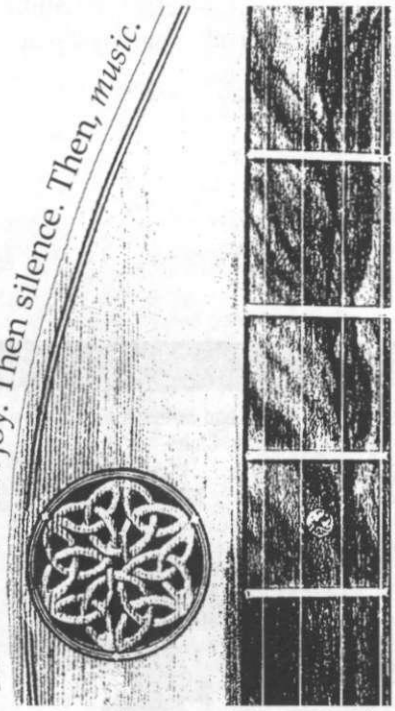
First love, then joy. Then silence. Then, music.



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News & Notes

The summer of 2005 will bring a new hammered dulcimer festival to Ireland to continue the work started by the Cork Dulcimer Fest, so ably run by Christie Burns. As a result of Christie's work, a small, but active, group of players was established in Co. Antrim.

One of Co. Antrim's traditional music teachers, Dick Glasgow, is organizing the **Causeway Dulcimer Festival.** The probable dates are June 10–12 in Bushmills, Co. Antrim. Dick is gathering a dedicated team of advisors from Ireland, Scotland, England and the United States to help the event happen.

For more information, as it becomes available, contact Rick Davis by e-mail at rick@cutedogmusic.com or visit his website, www.cutedogmusic.com, for a link to the new festival page.

Sam Gullo, an independent video producer, has produced a twenty-seven minute video that tells the story of the annual **Dulcimer Funfest** in Evart, Michigan. The video was developed for the Original Dulcimer Players Club (ODPC) and was featured on a local PBS station. A limited number of DVD and VHS copies are available for sale. Contact Sam at Special Event Video, 14551 Bade Dr., Warren, MI 48088, 586-771-2851 or sgullo@mediaccess.net for information.

The Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas in September 2004 presented trophies and instruments to many delighted contest performers. Dulcimer players were among them, and we congratulate them all. **National Mountain Dulcimer Championship:** Erin Rogers (Kansas), 1st place; Steve Eulberg (Colorado), 2nd place; Joe Collins (North Carolina), 3rd place. **National Hammer Dulcimer Championship:** David Mahler (Texas), 1st place; Princess Harris (Kansas), 2nd place; Samantha Oberkfell (Missouri), 3rd place. *Editor's Note: Both Erin Rogers and David Mahler are teenagers.*

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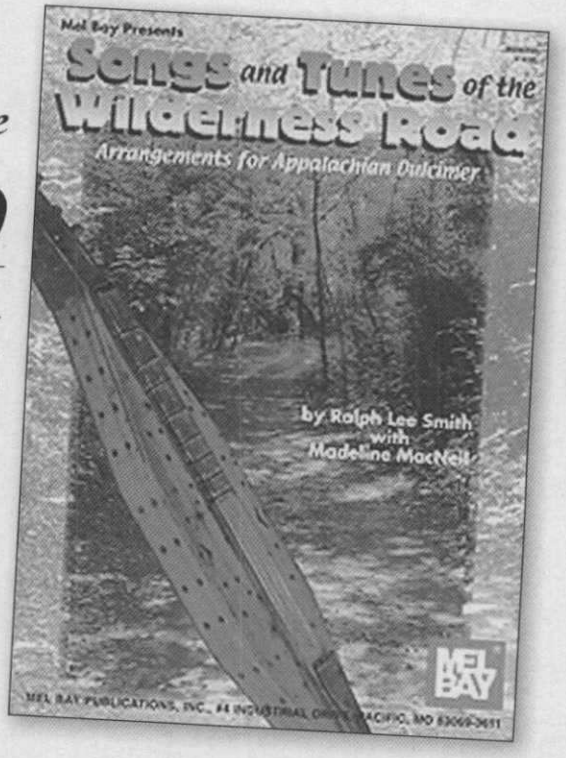
Songs and Tunes of the Wilderness Road



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Letters To Us

Dear DPN

At the 2004 Harmony Harvest Festival in Lancaster, Ohio I had the pleasure of conducting workshops and performing. The concert had a profound effect on both the audience and myself and I wanted to share the experience with DPN readers.

I played a medley of American tunes that included "By the Light Of the Silvery Moon," "Shine On, Harvest Moon," and "Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie." The audience sang along, becoming an important part of the program. To close the set, I played "America the Beautiful," and prefaced the music with some words about our troops in Iraq being in harm's way and deserving of our support.

As I began to play the song the second time, the audience began singing and several in the back rows rose to their feet. As if a signal had been given, everyone stood to sing, many with tears in their eyes! I cannot describe the feelings that came over me at that point.

After the concert, I was approached by David Lynch of Sweet Wood Instruments. He shared with me the story of his daughter who is in the US Navy and had just received her orders to deploy to Iraq (her second assignment there). Truly, dulcimer folks as represented by those at Harmony Harvest are great and wonderful people.

John Sackenheim
Okeana, Ohio

Dear DPN:

I thought I'd send a smile along with my renewal. I was asked by the members and instructor of my water aerobics group if I would provide dulcimer music for a session as a change from the usually-heard boom box. I said yes, and made a list of fiddle tunes and waltzes to play.

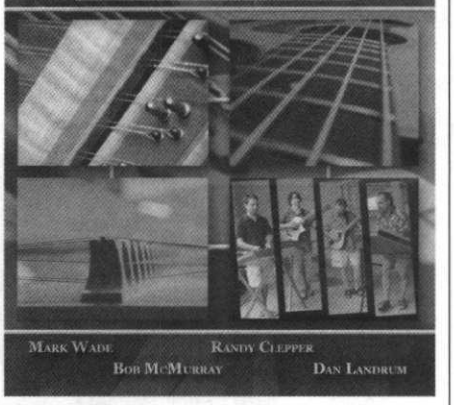
Our pool is quite large, and I was concerned about the group being able to hear the mountain dulcimer. We rigged up a sound system with the microphone stuck into a sound hole. I played for the hour session and the thirty participants sang along whenever they recognized a song. Everyone had nice comments and many questions such as, Will your fingers be sore from playing that long?, How can you remember all those songs? and How do you know where to put your fingers? I did my best to be helpful.

The next day in the middle of the session, we had a "mingle" in which you wander around the pool and introduce yourself to others. One lady said to me, "My name is Helen," to which I answered, "My name is also Helen." She replied, "Yesterday a nice lady came and played the zither for us, and her name was Helen too." I laughed, "That lady was me!" She looked me over for several seconds and then said, "You sure do look different in a bathing suit!"

I'm not sure water aerobics and dulcimers are a good fit, but it was fun to try. I wonder if anyone else has ever played dulcimer for a water fitness class.

Helen Blackburn
Mason, Ohio

HAMMER ON!



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Musical Reviews

Neal Walters

Among the people taking the mountain dulcimer to places it's never been before is Californian Andy Robinson. **Exotic America** is a little more like Ali Farka Toure meets the Gallier Brothers. Andy describes it as "eclectic-pop-inflected-world-music-influenced-power-folk." It is a blend of "rustic folk instrument and rock rhythm sections, ethnic percussion and musical toys, wordless vocals, synthesizers, conversation and laughter—whatever sounds capture the imagination." The tunes are original and Andy receives superb support from sympathetic sidemen. Andy plays acoustic and electric dulcimer as well as guitar and most of the percussion. The dulcimer is seldom out front in the mix, but this isn't an album you're going to want simply for the dulcimer playing. Each tune is an aural soundscape that is descriptive and compelling. Tunes include Moving Mountains, The Bridges Are Burning, 95 Tears, and Conversations.

For something completely different, Idlewild's new recording is ultra-traditional, albeit the tradition in question is from French and Central European. David Sharp is the band's central focus on mountain dulcimers, recorders, whistle, flute and mandolin. Carol Sharp adds hammered dulcimer, Celtic harp, Gothic Bray harp, bowed psaltery, whistle and tambourine while friends of the band contribute button accordion, guitar, hurdy gurdy, piano accordion and piccolo trumpet. There are a generous thirty-one cuts on **Dans de les Marionettes** and they are described as Breton, French, Italian, Dutch, Belgian, German, Michon, and Arbeau. This is courtly music, but it has a definite pulse to it as well. "Renaissance music with soul" is as good a description as any. Idlewild does a great job in playing all of the tunes with sprightly grace and imaginative arrangements.

It's been a while since we've heard from Lorraine and Bennett Hammond, but it was definitely worth the wait. **Jingalo Gypsy** is chock full of good songs and tunes played well and lovingly by two of New England's favorite troubadours. Bennett's guitar playing is the perfect complement to Lorraine's always stunning work on mountain dulcimer, harp, and banjo. He also delivers a stunning solo piece called The Emerald Necklace. John Kirk, Joel Mabus, Sarah Bauhan, Kent Allyn, Joanie Bronfman, Neal Macmillan, Alaina Hammond, and the Kossoy Sisters contribute on fiddle, mandolin, whistle, concertina, pipes, and backing vocals. Tunes range from staples of the Hammonds' live performance repertoire such as Haying Time and Jingalo Gypsy to new songs such as Her Husband, Gypsy Dave, and My Mother's Face. There's a great fiddle tune from West Virginia's Ernie Carpenter (Elk River Blues) and a spirited version of The Plains of Boyle. Throw in a Child ballad and a lovely O'Carolan tune along with the Hammond originals and there's definitely something for everyone. This is a lovely album by two fine musicians at the top of their form.

Journey to the Heartland features Ken Kolodner's exquisite hammered dulcimer playing on a variety of tunes from Appalachian, Celtic and Québecois traditions. Elke Baker and Laura Risk on fiddle, Robin Bullock on guitar and mandolin, and Paddy League on guitar provide stellar support. Ken also plays fiddle on several cuts. The tunes are great and mostly uncommon in the sense that they haven't been recorded often. Ken's playing sizzles on the really fast tunes, but he can also be lyrical with a delightful bounce at more stately tempos. The backup musicians are wonderful in their own right and add immensely to the overall sound. Ken makes great use of syncopation and his dampers add texture to several of the tunes. The uptempo rhythms are infectious and there is a bevy of beautiful waltzes too. Ken has certainly produced a winner here. Tunes include: Caspian's Return/Cuckoo's Nest, Lady of the Lake/Farewell Trion/Shenandoah Falls, and Polka of the Setting Sun/Reel Antoinette.

Hammer On! is a wonderful new collaboration between Dan Landrum and Mark Wade. Two of the hottest hammered dulcimer players around combine with Randy Clepper on a host of stringed instruments and Bob McMurray on guitar. Collectively, the group also calls itself Hammer On! The band began as a chance encounter when all four members met in Evart, Michigan during the 2003 festival. Deciding that it would be fun to find a quiet corner somewhere and play a little music, this meeting turned into a jam session that lasted for hours, and drew a crowd of several hundred spectators who kept asking when "the band" would be performing in the future. Dan volunteered his basement recording studio and several rooms in his house and this recording is the result. The studio setting allowed overdubbing of percussion and other niceties that really add to the overall feel. Falling Water is but one good example, as the notes seem to cascade just as water does. Randy and Bob get equal billing with Dan and Mark that is well deserved, as a quick listen to Sweet Georgia Brown will demonstrate. Other tunes include Rondo in 7/8, Enamored, Cluck Old Hen, and Dance of the Hours. Hot stuff!

Sam Rizzetta needs no introduction to readers of this journal. In addition to being one of our finest dulcimer builders and players, he's a regular columnist for DPN as well. Apart from his many credits as a craftsman and performer, he's also a prolific tunesmith. He has been writing good tunes and performing them since the 1970's and now has a book to share them with other dulcimer players. **A Collection of Original Music** has all of that and more. Each piece is clearly laid out in standard notation with accompanying chords. This will be a treasure trove of new material for hammered dulcimer players, but mountain dulcimer players should be able to make good use of it as well if they read music

and have a rudimentary knowledge of their fretboards. The book also contains some good playing variations and tips on techniques, like the walking bass part on Boiler House Blues. The tunes include reels, hoedowns, hornpipes, waltzes, jigs, rags, blues, boogies, slow airs, meditations, hymns, "cat tunes", and a round. Highly recommended.

Exotic America • Andy Robinson, Brontosaurus Records, 4945 Art Street, San Diego, CA 92115-2511, 619-582-7237, robinsong@aol.com, www.andyrobinson.com(CD)

Dans de les Marionettes • Idlewild, c/o David Sharp, P.O. Box 65702, Salt Lake City, UT 84165-0702, 1-801-268-4789, www.idlewildrecordings.com (CD)

Jingalo Gypsy • Lorraine and Bennett Hammond, Snowy Egret Music, 146 High Street, Brookline, MA 02445, www.greatacoustics.org (CD)

Journey to the Heartland • Ken Kolodner, Maggie's Music, PO Box 490, Shady Side, MD 20764, Maggie@ maggiesmusic.com, www.maggies music.com (CD)

Hammer On! • Mark Wade, Dan Landrum, Randy Clepper, Bob McMurray, dan@dan landrum.com, www.hammeron.com(CD)

A Collection of Original Music for Hammered Dulcimer and Other Instruments • Sam Rizzetta, Mel Bay Publications, Inc., #4 Industrial Drive, Pacific, MO 63069, email@melbay.com, www.melbay.com (Book)

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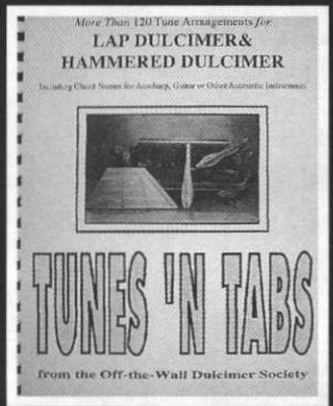

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Pfnt3@aol.com or cjleblanc2@msn.com
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jam@kcnet.com

Events

February 18–20 • Wyoming, OH
Wyoming Dulcifest. Workshops (HD, MD and other instruments) and concert. Info: David Savage, 33 Fleming Road, Cincinnati OH 45215, 513-821-7266, davidsavage@earthlink.net.

February 19–20 • Virginia Beach, VA
Hammered Dulcimer Weekend sponsored by The Hammer Heads of Southeastern Virginia. Info: Sandy Barton, 1523 Stillwood St., Chesapeake VA 23320, 757-312-9696, hammerheads@cox.net.

February 24–27 • Montréal, Québec Folk Alliance Conference. Folk music and dance workshops, artist showcases, and other activities. Info: Folk Alliance, 296 Wayne Ave., Suite 902, Silver Spring, MD 20910. 301-588-8185, fa@folk.org, folk.org.

February 25–27 • Dayton, OH
Dulcimer Doin's. MD, HD, other folk instruments. Informal sharing and jamming, some workshops. Open stage. Info: Gretchn Beers, 1756 Hilt Road, Yellow Springs OH 45387, 937-767-1457, geocities.com/daytondulcimers.

March 4–5 • Albany, NY
16th Annual Mountain Dulcimer Music Fest. Workshops, open stage, jam sessions, vendors, and concerts. Info: Lori Keddell, 119 Co. Hwy 107, Johnstown, NY 12095. 518-762-7516, lark119@citlink.net.

March 4–5 • Overland Park, KS 6th Annual Workshop & Concert. HD, MD, guitar. Info: Linda G. Thomas, 6409 E. 110th St., Kansas City, MO 64134. 816-763-5040, lindadan@primary.net.

March 4–6 • East Troy, WI
Stringalong Weekend. Dulcimer concerts, workshops, singing, and dancing. Bring or rent an instrument. Info: UWM Folk Center, Ann Schmid, PO Box 413, Milwaukee, WI 53201, 800-636-FOLK (3655), uwm.edu/Dept/Folk/.

Continued on next page.

EVENTS CALENDAR DEADLINES

November – January issue:
Events from the 2nd weekend of Nov. through the 2nd weekend of Feb.
Deadline: August 5th

February – April issue:
Events from 2nd weekend of Feb. through the 2nd weekend of May
Deadline: November 5th

May – July issue:
Events from 2nd weekend of May through Labor Day weekend
This is our largest yearly calendar
Deadline: February 5th

August – October issue:
Events from the 2nd weekend of Aug. through the 2nd weekend of Nov.
Deadline: May 5th

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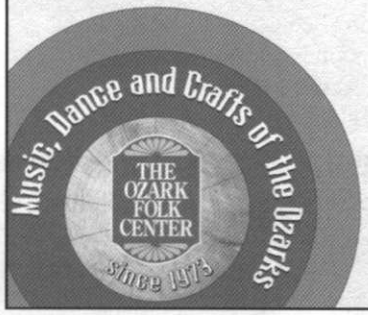

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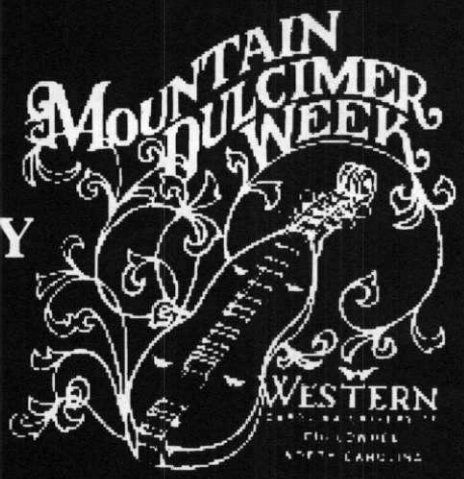

The 6th Annual
Western Carolina University Mountain Dulcimer Week

Cullowhee, North Carolina
Sunday, June 19 - Friday, June 24, 2005

Performer-Instructors:

Bill Taylor • Steve Seifert • Janita Baker • Larry Conger • Betty Smith • Steve Eulberg • Thomasina Levy • Kenneth Bloom • Ralph Lee Smith

Phyllis Gaskins • Don Pedi • Flora MacDonald Gammon • John Huron • Lois Hornbostel • Wayne Seymour • Jim Miller • Mike Anderson • Hutch Hutchinson

Carilyn Vice • Stephen K. Smith • Joel Paul • David Beede • Aaron O'Rourke • Gary Sager • Marc Mathieu • Joe Shelton • and more...

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- Special 12-hr. Course on "Bowing the Dulcimer" with Kenneth Bloom
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- Get-Acquainted Dinner & Activities Sun. night
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To get on the mailing list for your catalog and registration form (to be mailed in February) contact: Distance & Continuing Education, Western Carolina University, 138 Outreach Center, Cullowhee, NC 28723 or e-mail hensley@email.wcu.edu. For information on curriculum or staffing, contact Lois Hornbostel, Mountain Dulcimer Week Director, P. O. Box 907, Bryson City, NC 28713 or Ldulc@gte.net. Don't forget to visit us at our **new web address** for updates and photos: http://edoutreach.wcu.edu/dulcimer.

March 6–11 • Brasstown, NC
Beginning Mountain Dulcimer. Info: John C. Campbell Folk School, One Folk School Rd., Brasstown, NC 28902. 800-365-5724, folkschool.org.

March 6–12 • Abingdon, VA
Mountain Dulcimer Building, Elderhostel. Info: Jeff Sebens, 10 Concord Road, Meadows of Dan, VA 24120. 866-952-1865, meadows-music.com.

March 9–13 • Ashley, OH
Buckeye Dulcimer Festival. Workshops (MD, HD), concerts, jamming, and gospel sing. Info: Louise Ziegler, 232 W. High St., Ashley, OH 43003. 740-747-2326, geocities.com/buckeyedulcimer.

March 10–12 • Port Allen, LA
Lagniappe Dulcimer Fete. HD, MD workshops, concerts, jam sessions, vendors. Info: Lagniappe Dulcimer Society, 18633 Bayride Court, Baton Rouge LA 70817, 225-751-2047, pfnt3@aol.com, lagniappedulcimer.com.

March 11–12 • Florence, AL
Winter Fest. Potluck suppper, workshops and jamming. Info: Dewayne Posey, 597 Co. Rd. 224, Florence AL 35634, 256-764-2427, ivag2@aol.com.

March 11–13 • Lexington, KY
Ohio Valley Gathering (MD, HD). Workshops, concert, jamming, vendors. Info: Nancy & Ron Barkley, 502-231-4914, louisvilledulcimers.org.

March 11–13 • Brasstown, NC
Beginning Mountain Dulcimer. Info: John C. Campbell Folk School, One Folk School Rd., Brasstown, NC 28902, 800-365-5724, dulcimer@folkschool.org, folkschool.org.

March 18–20 • Shepherdstown, WV
Upper Potomac Spring Dulcimer Fest. HD & mixed instruments. Workshops, concerts, jam sessions. Info: 304-263-2531, updf@earthlink.net, dulcimerfest.org.

March 19–20 • Lumpkin, GA
Westville Dulcimer Festival (MD). Workshops, open stage, jam sessions. Info: Patty Cannington, Westville, P.O. Box 1850, Lumpkin, GA. 31815, 888-733-1850, westville.org.

March 19–20 • Montgomery, AL
Montgomery Dulcimer Players 7th Annual Jam & Campout. Open stage, jamming. Vendors welcome. Info: Barbara Betts, 334-277-9102, babbetts@bellsouth.net.

March 20–26 • Brasstown, NC
Beginning Hammered Dulcimer. Info: John C. Campbell Folk School, One Folk School Rd., Brasstown, NC 28902, 800-365-5724, dulcimer@folkschool.org, folkschool.org.

March 20–26 • Brasstown, NC
Building a Hammered Dulcimer. Info: John C. Campbell Folk School, One Folk School Rd., Brasstown, NC 28902, 800-365-5724, folkschool.org.

Continued on next page.

The Fourth Annual
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Upper Potomac Dulcimer Fest
Spring Festival
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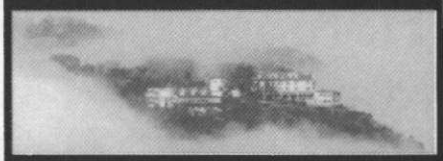

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Dulcimer Week

July 3-9

with

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Lois Hornbostel, Bonnie Carol, Ken Kolodner
Bill Taylor, Peter Tommerup, Neal Walters
Anna Duff & Heidi Cerrigione

July 3-9, Sing & Swing Week • July 3-9, Dulcimer Week • July 10-16, Celtic Week
July 17-23, Performance Lab • July 17-23, Old-Time Music & Dance Week
NEW! July 25-31, Fiddle Week • July 24-30, Contemporary Folk Week • July 25-31, Guitar Week

Call or write for a FREE catalog: The Swannanoa Gathering,
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Tel: (828) 298-3434 • Email: gathering@warren-wilson.edu • Website: www.swangathering.com

March 22 • Mt. Dora, FL
Dulcimer Day. Workshop and concert. Info: dulcirah@msn.com.

Mar 31–Apr 2 • Palestine, TX
Palestine Old-Time Music & Dulcimer Festival. Includes MD, HD. Jamming, workshops, concerts, vendors. Info: Jerry Wright, 4328 Effie, Bellaire, TX 77401, 713-432-1058, pickin@aol.com, geocities.com/palestinefestival.

April 1–3 • Gulf Shores, AL
Jubilee Pickers Dulcimer Fest. Workshops (MD, HD), jamming, open stage, vendors welcome. Info: Linda Parker, 251-960-1469, lindac25@hotmail.com.

April 9 • Kinston, NC
Waterbound Dulcimers. Mountain dulcimer workshops and concert. Info: Ron Cyr, 252-523-8709, roncyr@juno.com or Nancy Galambush, 252-747-8757, jcng@esn.net.

April 10–15 • Abingdon, VA
HD, MD Playing–Elderhostel for advanced beginners. Info: Jeff Sebens, 10 Concord Rd., Meadows of Dan VA 24120, 276-952-1865, meadows-music.com.

April 15–16 • Tishomingo, MS
Hollis Long Memorial Dulcimer Festival. MD, HD. Sponsored by Alasippi Dulcimer Association. Info: Floyd Cook, 850-638-0550.

April 15–17 • Bennington, OK
Winter Creek Reunion at David's Dulcimers. Workshops (MD, HD), concerts, and jamming. All acoustic instruments welcome. Info: David Turner, 10264 W. Rancho Diego Lane, Crowley TX , 817-297-7854, dcturner@ev1.net.

April 16 • Fairmont, WV
WV Mountaineer Dulcimer Club Spring Meeting. (MD, HD) Jamming, pot luck lunch and open stage. Info: Patty Looman, 1345 Bitonti St., Star City, WV 26505, 304-599-5343.

April 17–23 • Elkins, WV
Spring Dulcimer Week. In-depth classes for all levels of HD and MD players. Jam sessions, concerts, and guest artists. Info: Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241, 304-637-1209, augustaheritage.com.

April 19–23 • Mt. View, AR
Dulcimer Jamboree. MD, HD. Contests, workshops and concerts. Info: Dulcimer Jamboree, Ozark Folk Center, Mt. View, AR 72560, 870-269-3851, ozarkfolkcenter@arkansas.com, ozarkfolkcenter.com.

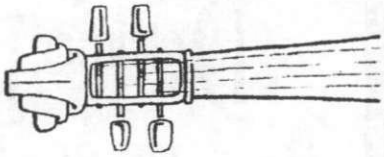
April 22 • Tyler, TX
Dixie Elementary Mountain Dulcimer Festival, open to all elementary age players and music teachers. Workshops, concerts, pizza lunch, student showcase, and jam session. Info: Johnny Ray, 18079 CR 416, Tyler TX 75704, 903-597-0543, johnny.ray@tylerisd.org@tylerisd.org.

Continued on next page.

The 11th Annual

Winston-Salem Dulcimer Festival

May 6- 7 2005



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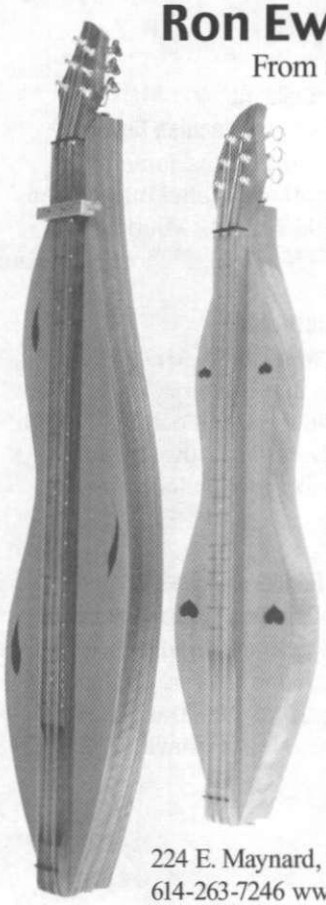

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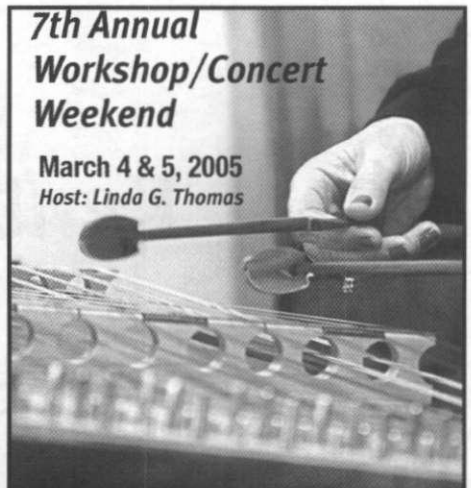

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Jams—Staying Together

by Rob Downie
Farmington Hills, Michigan

While you may not have realized it, I am willing to bet that some of the best and most enjoyable jams you have been in have been ones where everyone stayed together. Conversely, the ones that didn't seem to be as much fun were probably those where there were persistent ensemble problems.

A jam setting is joyously liberating in that each player can "do their own thing," whether that happens to be playing melody, backup, or chording. The price of this freedom, however, is the obligation to adhere strictly to a common tempo. Stronger players are not exempt from this responsibility. Indeed, it applies to these individuals all the more because others are likely to follow them.

The importance of this cannot be overstated. The inability of a group to stay in unison will detract from the musical experience for performers and audience alike. I have seen it get so bad that the piece has completely broken down and the group has had to stop in mid-performance. Following are several things you can do to contribute to a good ensemble.

Listen to the Starter

The starter doesn't just get the piece going; the starter sets the tempo. As you listen to the introduction, get the starter's rhythm in your mind. Tap your foot, if that helps, or begin whatever body movements you use to internalize the beat. When you come in, you should be right on the mark.

Respect the starter's tempo, even though it may—and probably will—be faster or slower than what you are used to. There is not one way to play a piece, and a different pace can add interest. I was once in a jam where our banjo player wanted to take "Five Foot Two" *slow.* We did, and the effect was intriguing.

If *you* are the starter, make sure your intro establishes a clear tempo. A tentative, halting, or unsure intro leaves the group to muddle through on its own. Practice intros for your favorite pieces until you are confident with them. If you call for a piece that you are not comfortable starting, ask someone else to start it. Alternatively, you can do "potatoes" or count 1-2-3-go, as long as you communicate your tempo.

Listen to the Rhythm Instruments

If there are rhythm instruments, the best way to keep in time is to key in on them. You will hear jam leaders yelling "Listen to the bass!" and you should always keep this exhortation in mind.

When players get out of synch with the bass, it means the bass has to follow the players rather than the other way around. What is worse, there may be two or more competing tempos in the group, putting the bass in the difficult position of trying to find and follow the most "popular" of these.

If you are a guitar or banjo player, there are things you can do as well to help hold the group together. One is to emphasize upbeats. I find that the combination of the bass playing downbeats and guitars and banjos playing upbeats really "locks in" the cadence. Another is to sit close to the bass player so that those in the rhythm section can better see and hear each other. (This may be more practical in a performing ensemble or a closed jam than in an open jam where there may be several bass players around the room.)

Listen to Others

In music, as in marching, you have to know when you are out of step—and how to fix it. Listen to those around you. If it sounds like you are off, drop out for a moment and find the beat, then get back in.

Play Offbeats (Upbeats)

If you are having trouble staying on the tempo, and if you are comfortable playing offbeats (upbeats), try doing this for a while. This will force you to be more conscious of the rhythm.

Practice with a Metronome

You may start a piece squarely on the beat, but then rush or drag without being aware of it. Holding a tempo is something that every musician must practice. While it comes more easily for some than for others, it can never be taken for granted. If you don't have a metronome, get one. Practice the pieces you are working on—and the ones you know—at the marking you think is appropriate, and at faster and slower speeds as well.

If you take this article to heart, you will become a better group player. This is true regardless of your level of ability or technical proficiency. You will also have more fun in jams. And finally, I can promise that the bass player will love you!

Rob Downie plays bass and is a self-described string band junkie. He is a veteran of numerous dulcimer festivals where he has helped in workshops and appeared in the evening concerts with performers such as Mark Wade and Linda Brockinton. Rob also performs with his wife, Nancy, a hammered dulcimer player. Rob is available for concerts or to assist on bass in dulcimer workshops or instructional camps. Contact him at Rhdownie@aol.com.

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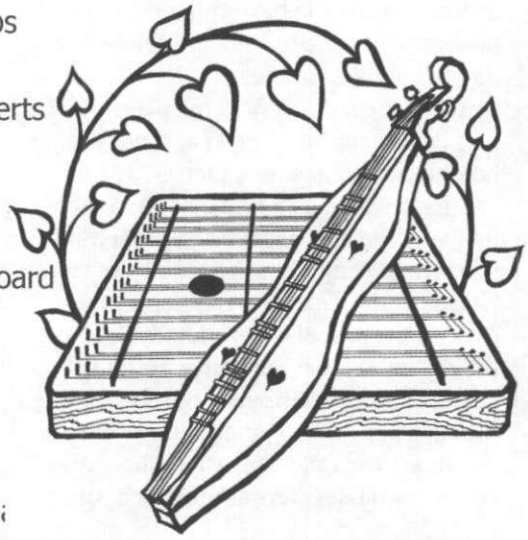

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by Johnny Ray

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Kate Taluga and Florida's School of Arts and Sciences

Kate Taluga is the energy and vision behind a unique after-school music program offered at The School of Arts and Sciences in Tallahassee, Florida. SAS is a charter school which serves children from kindergarten through eighth grade. The after-school program is not limited to students attending SAS but is open to any students in Leon County. Beginning in third grade, students may choose to learn to play the dulcimer.

After having been involved in the old-time music scene of Florida for a number of years, Kate and her husband, Gus Johnson, an excellent banjo player, began their SAS program in 2001. They ordered cardboard dulcimers from Backyard Music and assembled them over the Thanksgiving holidays for classes beginning in January.

The first semester they had seven students. All of the children begin with cardboard dulcimers sold to them at cost, unless their familys own wooden ones. If a student acquires a wooden dulcimer of their own, the after-school program buys back the original cardboard dulcimer—which is then sold to a new student at a reduced price. Many of the players today have instruments purchased from Folk Craft, McSpadden, Apple Wood, and Mountain Made Dulcimers.

After the first semester, Kate, wanting to improve her playing skills, applied for a teaching scholarship at the Western Carolina University Mountain Dulcimer Week in Cullowhee, North Carolina. Receiving the scholarship, sponsored by Josie Wiseman, and studying with Bill Taylor proved to be a giant step in Kate's development as a player and fueled her desire to see the SAS program grow.

One of the first songs the students learn is the dulcimer anthem "Bile Them Cabbage." Popular folk tunes like "Old Joe Clark" and "Liza Jane" add to their jam repertoire which includes upwards of thirty titles. They play mostly in DAD, but they have also learned tunes in DAA .

The program has grown into a string band that plays concerts in the wider community. For three years the group has attended the Florida Folk Festival and in 2004 was part of the opening ceremony, ran a jam session for young people, and performed on stage. They have also performed at the National School Age Care Alliance conference in Tampa and for legislators at the Florida State Capitol during children's advocacy week.

In 2002 the children learned that a fellow student was moving to a wheel chair and SAS, housed in an old church building, was not handicap-accessible. They decided to do a concert to raise awareness with other musicians from the community helping out. The concert was recorded, and the resulting CD was sold to raise money to build ramps and accessible bathrooms. When the local builders association saw what the children were doing, they pitched in and completed the project. Now funds from the CD, *Lights On After School,* are dedicated to student scholarships.

In 2004 the string band group held an old-time music festival for youth in the Tallahassee area. Students from the Panhandle down to Central Florida attended. All of the major string band instruments were featured and the event included a family dance. In addition to a grant from the Rintels Foundation, a pie auction and barbeque were sources of income for the event and a donated guitar and fiddle went home in the arms of two delighted young people.

We hope that reading about programs such as Kate's will inspire others to find ways to share the joy of the dulcimer with children.

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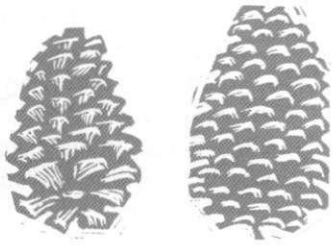
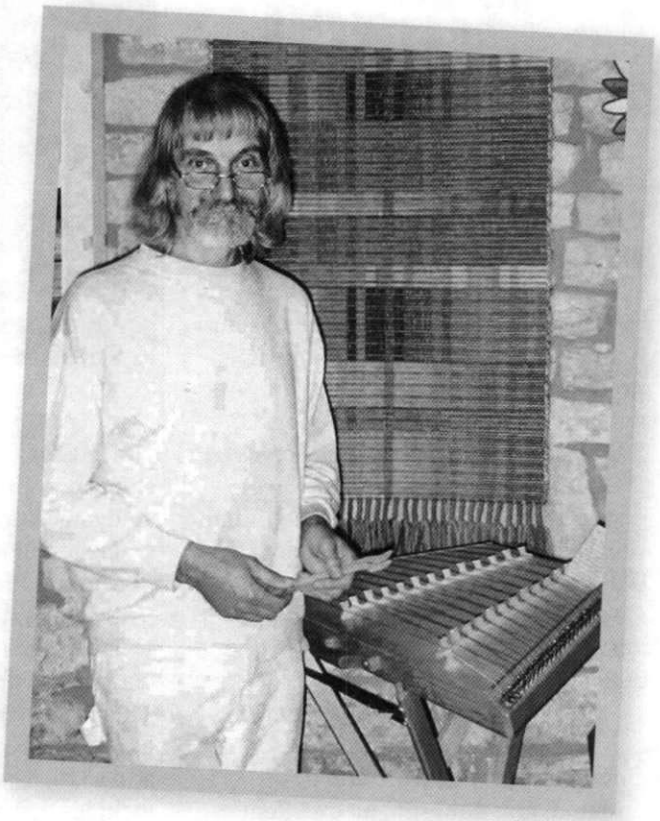


Hot on Dulcimers • Roger Frood

By Sheridan Hill
Black Mountain, North Carolina



Dulcimer maker and player Roger Frood of Glastonbury, England (the rumored home of King Arthur) has spent the past twenty years studying his craft and working to revive the dulcimer tradition in Great Britain and parts of Europe.

I visited Frood in the fall, accompanied by Salisbury, North Carolina, dulcimer player Lee Spears. Frood offered us a proper assortment of biscuits and poured black tea from an English tea pot. (The milk absolutely *must* be placed in the tea pot before the tea and boiling water, he explained; it is a chemical reaction necessary to contain the oils of the tea leaves.)

Dulcimer construction

With a degree in German and philosophy from Keele University near Stoke-on-Trent, England, Frood built furniture for ten years before launching into dulcimer building. He has his own way of doing just about everything, and can explain precisely why he came about his method. For instance, he maintains that beech is more resistant to splintering than maple. "Americans say that maple is the best wood for holding the tuning pins, but I drilled a series of holes of smaller and smaller diameter, and every time the beech was superior."

A serious environmentalist, Frood uses primarily native timbers. "I won't touch the tropical timbers, no matter if the seller says they are not from endangered wood. They all come out of the rain forest, one way or another. There's no way of telling where they're coming from. It's my personal opinion, but I don't think there's any excuse for using them, even for ebony fingerboards. I won't do it. That's one reason my instruments tend to end up much paler than other people's instruments."

Frood's luthiere shop, Dove Dulcimer Company, sits a few dozen feet from his stone house on two secluded acres just outside the Medieval city of Glastonbury. Each dulcimer is handmade by Frood and reflects his building tenets. He stresses the importance of equal string tension in design.

"I'm very hot on tuning stability. This is a fundamental principle, essential for tuning stability. For instance, if the temperature changes, all the strings expand or contract equally. I've met dulcimer makers who don't know how strings behave. I studied an old engineering handbook and found a formula for calculating the bend of wood. For instance, one dulcimer maker said he had made great strides in increasing the sustain and volume of his instruments. If you get more volume, you get less sustain. And if you get more sustain, you have less volume. When you hit a string, you put in a given packet of energy. Either it comes out quickly or it comes out slowly," he laughs. "If it comes out quickly you get volume. If it comes out slowly you get sustain."

Not all luthieres will agree with Frood's theory on sustain, tone and volume, but any protests will need to match the man's enthusiasm and confidence.

"The higher the string tension, the better the string sounds. Strings sound
signed the instrument so that you have the best toning with unlimited life expectancy for the strings."

Although several people take credit for the design of the X-shaped dulcimer stand, Frood says he is its originator.

"I invented the X-shaped stand that folds into a stick. I was camping and noticed that the toilet booth had a wooden concertina frame, and that gave me the idea for this stand—which is half of a stand."

A Beatles' schoolmate

Frood's first brush with fame was
sitting beside George Harrison in primary school. More recently, he was featured in an August, 2003 BBC interview about the dulcimer's slow passing from glory, its historical importance and unique sound. Frood told the BBC that there

are only about two hundred dulcimer players left in Britain. "I don't want it to disappear," he said.

He is a longtime member and supporter of Britain's Nonsuch Dulcimer Club, launched at Glebe House in Cornwall in the spring of 1990. Five years later, when the club noted that *Dulcimer Players News* addressed both types of dulcimers, they included the mountain dulcimer as well.

"During the last few years, I've been trying to get the dulcimer up and running in Europe—France, for example, where the dulcimer had disappeared— as well as England. I have been attending a festival in France for fifteen years, and there's the beginning of a revival. There are some very good players there."

His public relations efforts on behalf of the dulcimer are aided by his multilingual abilities: Frood speaks French, German "and a little Flemish." Three times a year for the past four years he has attended a folk music festival in Belgium, where he explains the operation and structure of the dulcimer as well as its history and how to play one. He also offers a one-week course on how to build a dulcimer.

"Belgium is another place the dulcimer had almost faded out completely. Until I began attending a folk festival there a few years ago, the last one played there was in Brussels about 1905. Within the last few years, we've gone from one dulcimer player in Belgium to fifty."

Roger Frood
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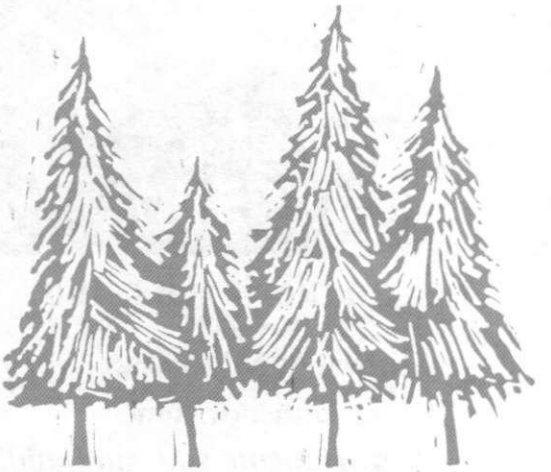
Sheridan Hill is a personal biographer and ethical will writer living in Black Mountain, North Carolina. Her essays and articles have been published in many newspapers and magazines, including Parabola, The Jurist *and* Our State. *She may be reached through www.sheridanhill.com.*



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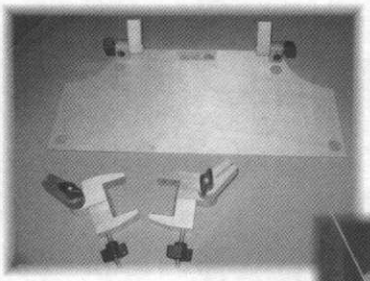

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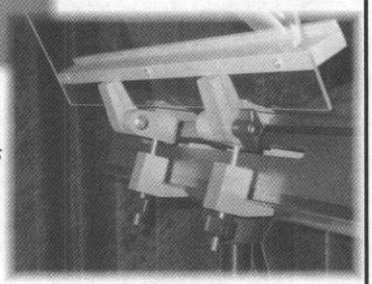

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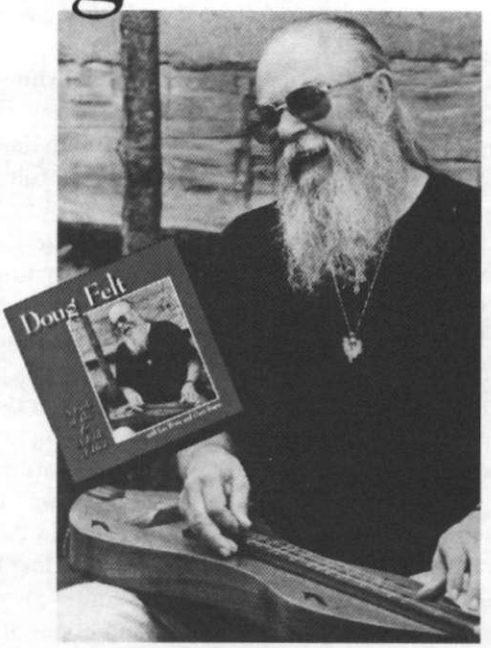

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~ Enjoy Life ~

A Common Song

by Carolyn Smith
Durango, Colorado

The story which follows was written in 1993, shortly after I had started playing the hammer dulcimer. It says something about the healing power of music in dealing with grief, in bringing people together, and in mending our brokenness.

On a train heading West in late September my husband, Glenn, and I found a snug space in the plexiglass dome car where I would set up and play my hammer dulcimer. Familiar hymns and tunes from the 19th century began to tumble out of this trapezoidal instrument, joining the sounds of the train wheels on the tracks, the vibrations of the cars, and the resonance of an occasional whistle. The train was the Southwest Chief running between Chicago and Los Angeles, and it followed for much of the way, the original Santa Fe Trail.

The conductor had just announced that the wagon ruts parallel to the train tracks were indeed part of this famous trail. He reminded us that pack mules, stagecoaches, wagon teams, and prairie schooners had shared this route long before the railroads came. Before that, the Indians, conquistadors and fur trappers had done the same. I looked at the famous ruts and felt that each furrow could tell me many stories. There were settlers, traders, brides and babies who had gone westward on this same path. When the earth was damp and the dust was low, had they seen these same bushes in bloom?

In late September the desert in Eastern Colorado and New Mexico is a vivid mass of yellow flowering sagebrush. As far as one can see there is the blooming sage set off by the red sandstone cliffs and rocks and spires gradually honed by the elements. Sunshine and the blue cloudless sky entered the dome car windows above our heads. Surrounding us were windows full of the yellow sage, the red rock, the rutted dirt trail, hogans facing to the East, and occasional herds of sheep, goats, and antelope. Here the land belonged to five different Indian nations. For long stretches of time and space there were no roads, no cars, no billboards or other signs of what year or what century we were passing through.

On this train heading West in late September, in the sun drenched dome car of the Southwest Chief, I had chosen to share some music with my husband and other travelers, one of whom I will never forget. I was playing a set of old familiar hymns. Amazing Grace led into How Great Thou Art. The Balm in Gilead melded into The Old Rugged Cross and on it went. I noticed that the man who came and stood beside me knew every hymn and was singing every verse. A joy in singing simply exuded from him. I would finish and he would request just one more hymn and so we continued on for an hour or more. In the Garden, Be Thou My Vision, and Jacob's Ladder were followed by I'll Fly Away and and Where the Soul Never Dies.

He shared with me that all of these hymns had been his mother's favorites. It seemed that each new request was her all-time favorite. He then shared with me that he was on his way to Los Angeles to bury his mother. I told him that I was on my way to Durango for the wedding of my daughter, Corey Sue. Some of these same hymns were to be a part of the prelude music I would be playing in a mountain meadow in Coal Bank Pass near the Continental Divide where she was to be married. He said he would be playing also, for the funeral service, playing the piano as he does in his church in Chicago. Before he left to return to his family elsewhere on the train, he expressed to me what hearing his mother's favorite hymns had meant to him that morning. I expressed to him my hope that this music could bring the same message of God's comforting love into the meadow ceremony in a few days. At that moment I felt that the wedding had already begun. The prelude was now. The ceremony would continue to unfold according to the plans and hopes and prayers already put into existence.

Weddings and funerals symbolize the joys and sorrows in our lives, we had concluded. These emotions were both part of each of these celebrations and were both present in each of us right now as we reflected and prepared our respective roles. We rejoiced in the belief that his mother's spirit was released from a body worn out from a long illness. He rejoiced in sensing her spiritual presence with us at the very moment. At the same time I knew that if I reflected deeply even at a time of joyous celebration, I would find the dusty corners in my family history, the patches over wounded relationships, the thoughts of what might have been or should have been, the "if only" thoughts that make up the non-history in a family and remain half-hidden like little dust-devils under the bed. Yes, the same hymns and their message of God's comforting love were needed. The prelude was now, but it would sound again.

Indeed, as I look back, the *Denver Post* had proclaimed the day of the wedding as that day in October when the aspens in the southern Rockies were at their absolute peak of color. The blue cloudless sky and the sunshine filled the meadow with a temperature in the 80's. As far as one could see, there were hills of yellow and golden aspens set off by the white granite in the mountains and the mallard coloring of the evergreens. For a brief while, as the bride, sitting sidesaddle on a chestnut colt wearing her great grandmother's wedding dress—all handmade in eyelet and tatting—slowly being led along a rutted dirt trail to the place where her bridegroom was waiting. For a brief while, with the hymns and tunes from an earlier time slipping out of the dulcimer into that high country air, it seemed there were no other signs of what year or even what century we were passing through.

The ancient, rutted trail will always be. It twists and turns into my future and around the bend, just beyond the pass, I hear myself playing these old tunes. I wonder if I will still be

transported back to that moment either in the meadow in Coal Bank Pass or to that morning on the train. Which would I choose if I could have but one? My reply comes easy. They are already one.

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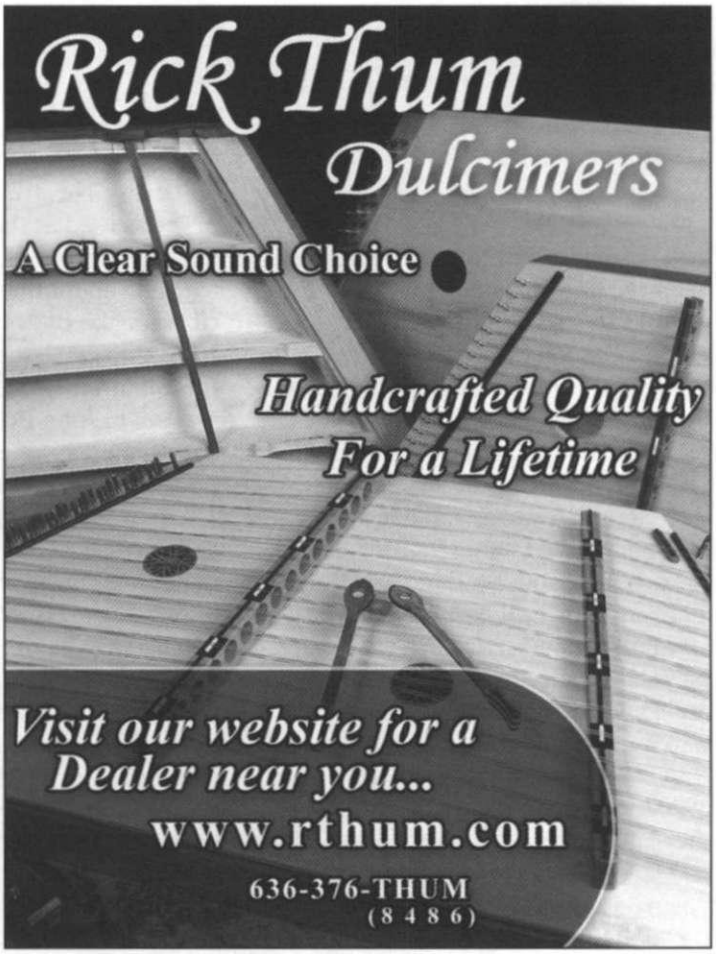
Carolyn H. Smith has been an active teacher of piano for 44 years and has played a Lost Valley dulcimer since 1993. She plays regularly as a volunteer at the hospital and has a nursing home percussion group, Old Folks at Home. Carolyn has released two hammer dulcimer CDs, Live From the Four Corners: A Saddle Bag of Songs *and* Broken in Pieces: Mended in Love.



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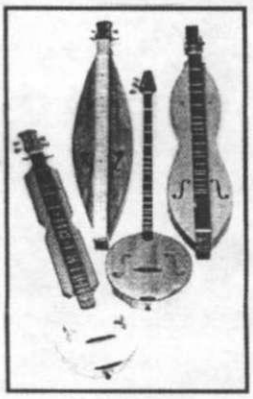

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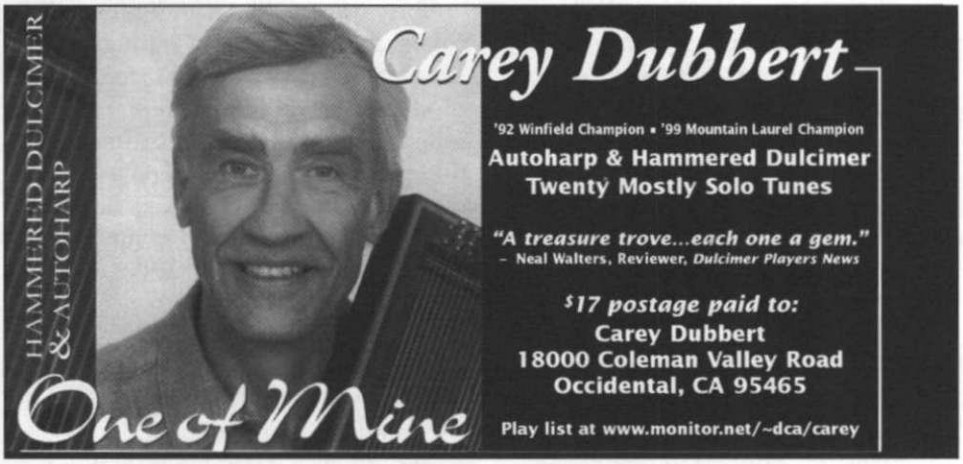

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Thanks!

An Interview

Terry Leonino &

by Heidi Cerrigione
Ellington, Connecticut

Let me introduce you to Magpie, the musical collaboration of Terry Leonino and Greg Artzner. Although I just recently met them, this award-winning duo has been playing music together since 1973. They make their home in the Washington, DC area, but their music has taken them to folk festivals and concert stages throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, England, Scotland and Italy.

In addition to their powerful vocals, Greg plays fingerstyle guitar while Terry plays harmonica, fretted dulcimer, mandolin and rhythm guitar. Their repertoire ranges from traditional folk, classic country, swing, and blues of the 1920s and 30s, to contemporary songs they have written together.

Magpie is widely known for their poignant topical songs, including political viewpoints and environmental causes. Greg began his musical career in the early sixties as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. His father worked for the National Urban League and the family became involved in the local activities. Terry spent many of her young summers in the deep south and witnessed the cruelty of racism. They haven't forgotten those experiences and continue to raise their voices in support of civil rights, freedom, justice and peace.

Terry and Greg have devoted a tremendous amount of time, energy and music to environmental causes. Their work has supported groups such as the National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation and the National Park Service. Their performances are in great demand and they have been featured at statewide environmental education associations around the country. They have produced special school programs with interesting titles like *Living Planet Icthyomusicology* and *A Mighty Hard Road.* These programs demonstrate their methods of using music as an effective tool for early childhood education.

In 2000, Magpie created a museum musical entitled *Tales of the Blue Crab,* which premiered at the Smithsonian's Discovery Theatre. The museum display was used as the set for the show and included many entertaining songs teaching about the life cycle of the Chesapeake Bay blue crab.

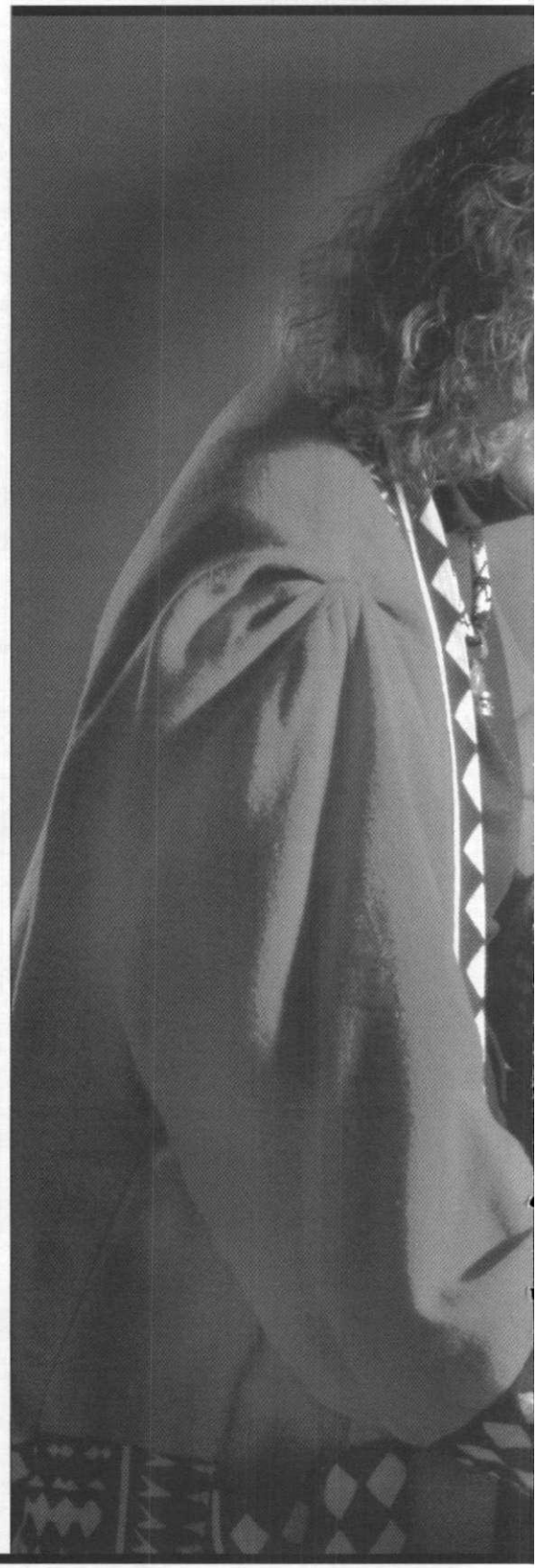
Also in 2000, they premiered *John Brown: Sword of the Spirit,* a one act play set in John Brown's jail cell and constructed as letter-based conversations between John and his wife, Mary. The play features Greg as John Brown and Terry as Mary Brown and they use the drama-music project as a venue to discuss racial issues.

The amount of research this team does to prepare their programs, or write one of their history-based songs, is astounding. They are passionate about cultural history and love to find stories that tell of real peoples' struggles. They delve into the personal aspects of their subjects and write "in the voice" of those characters. Most often the lyrics based on their research come first, with the melodies added later.

Terry owns three Keith Young dulcimers that can be heard throughout the eight recordings that Magpie has produced. While Greg's guitar is the foundation for the duo's instrumentation, the dulcimer is heard on a variety of songs. Terry enjoys the rich full tone of her dulcimers and they complement the guitar nicely.

As with many dulcimer players, Jean Ritchie was and remains Terry's most significant dulcimer influence. Jean was largely responsible for bringing the dulcimer to the attention of a wider folk music audience. Lorraine Hammond has been a long-time friend and inspiration as a player, and Terry also credits Joni Mitchell for her style of playing accompaniment.

At the request of good friends at Harper's Ferry National Historic Park, the song "Take Me Back to Harper's Ferry" was written for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Park. The lyrics bring together the fascinating history and the natural beauty of the valley at the confluence of the Shenandoah



Artzner

and Potomac rivers. The song was recorded on *Seed on the Prairie* in the key of B. Terry plays it with the bass string tuned to F# and the middle string and double melody strings tuned to B. It enables her to fashion chord intervals between the middle string and the low string with the double course as the drone to accompany her singing. She plays the melodic leads and variations on the middle string.

Magpie's friend Paulette Dickerson penned the tablature on the following pages and I have modified it slightly to match the recording. This tablature is a 1-5-5 tuning, akin to D-A-A. If you want to play along with the recording, tune your dulcimer *down* to B-F#-F#.

The *Seed on the Prairie* CD is one of eight recordings by Magpie. They've also recorded two CDs with Kim & Reggie Harris, and appear on numerous compilations.

You must visit their website at magpiemusic.com. There are links showing many aspects of their work: concert performances, recordings, school programs and their work as playwrights and actors.

Meeting Greg and Terry has been a musical inspiration! They have accomplished so much in thirty-one years with their extensive recordings, programs and research. It is heartwarming to imagine the number of young ears they have reached with their music and messages.

Heidi Cerrigione, a frequent contributor of articles for Dulcimer Players News, *teaches and writes books for autoharp and dulcimer and performs and records with her husband, John, and Neal & Coleen Walters (Doofus Music).*

DISCOGRAPHY

Last Month of the Year, 2002
Sword of the Spirit, 2000
Give Light, 1999
Circle of Life, 1997
Seed on the Prairie, 1994
Living Planet, 1989
If It Ain't Love, 1986
Working My Life Away, 1982
Magpie & Friends, 1978
With Kim & Reggie Harris
Guide My Feet, 1990
Spoken in Love, 1995

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Music follows on next page.

Take Me Back to Harper's Ferry

Words and music by Greg Artzner
and Terry Leonino © 1994

Chorus:

B C♯m

Take me down the Shen-an-do-ah to the join - ing of the streams, Take me

B 4 0 5 5
F# 5 0 4
F# 7 7 7 5 4 5 4 3 4 5 6 5 4 3 4 5

E F♯ G♯m

back to Har - per's Fer-ry Let me re - vel in my dreams Where the

3 4 2
3 4 1
6 5 4 5 4 3 3 4 5 4 3 1 1 7 7

B C♯m

beau - ty of the moun-tains and the strug - gle to be free flow in -

4 0 5 5
5 0 4
7 5 5 4 4 3 4 5 6 5 4 3 4 5

E F♯ B Bsus4

to one might - y riv - er to the sea of his-to - ry.

5 3 4 2 3
4 3 4 0 0
6 5 4 5 4 3 3 4 5 4 3 2 3 3

Verse 1:

B Bsus4 B B E G♯m

Deep in the chest-nut for-est far be - yond our mem-o-ry Dwell the

C♯m E F♯

spir - its of the peo - ple who lived in har - mon - y with the

B E G♯m

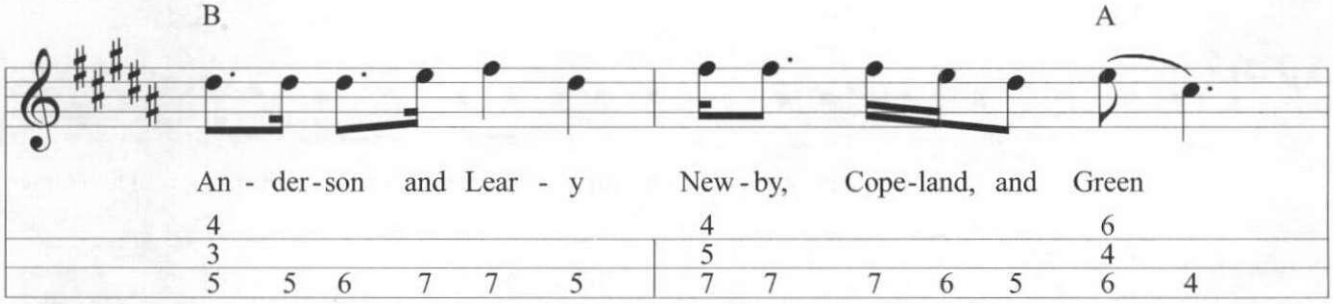
riv - ers and the wood-lands Took on - ly what they'd need from a -

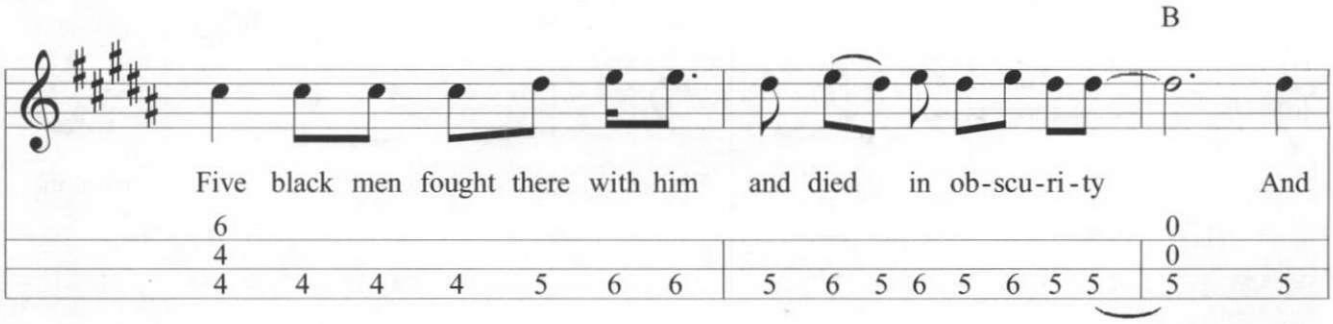
C♯m E F♯

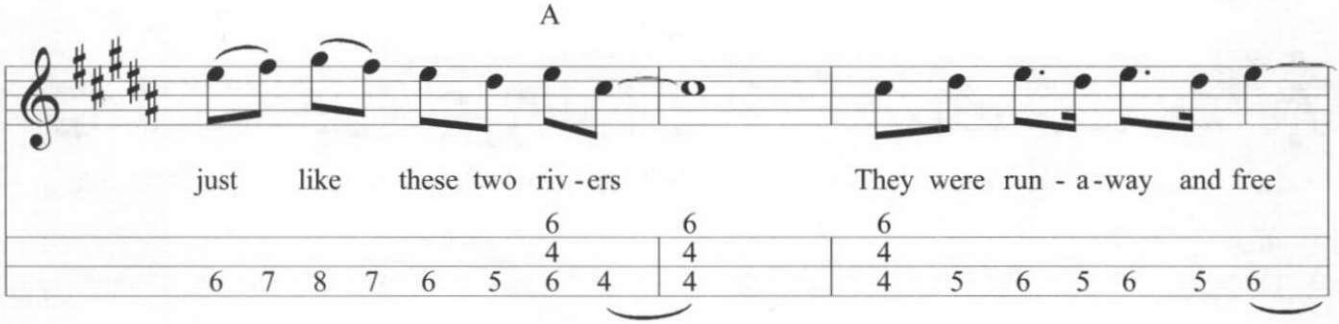
bun - dant game they hunt - ed gath - 'ring ber - ries, nuts and seeds

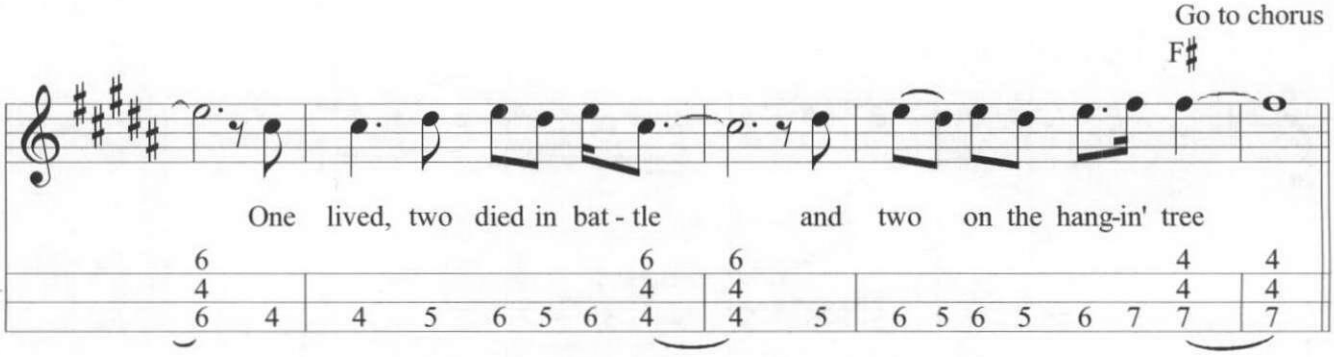
Music follows on next page.

Bridge after Third Verse:









Verse 2:

When the settlers built this little town they came to name it for
Mr. Harper's ferry that went from shore to shore.
The power of the raging rivers turned the wheels of trade,
Carried by the long canal 'til the railroads were laid.

Take me down…

Verse 3:

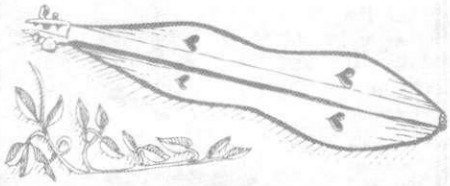
Like a twister out of Kansas, a man they called John Brown
Came in the name of freedom to this little river town.
With a rebel's desperation he seized the armory,
And gave up his life fighting for an end to slavery.

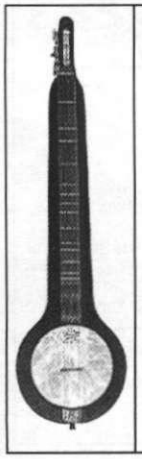
Bridge: Anderson and Leary…

Verse 4:

Come listen to the rivers, come listen to the land;
Come listen to the mountains and you will understand.
May her beauty and her story live long after we are gone,
Told by the rocks and rivers and by those who carry on.

Take me down…





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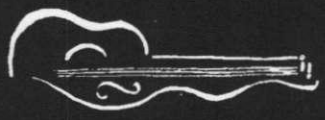

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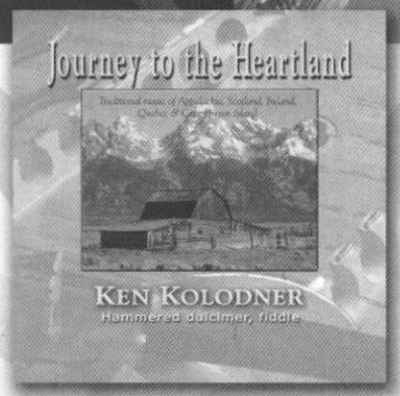

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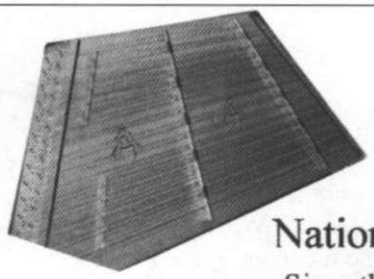

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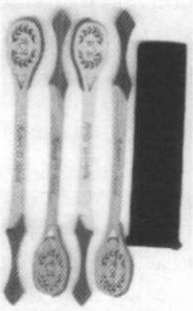

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The Art of Performing

by Steve Schneider

There's Practice, and There's Practice...

How many of us practice something so thoroughly that we assure ourselves we've "got it"—only to find out that we don't. We'd worked out all the kinks, made all the repairs, and figured out the best fingering or hammering patterns. We'd done our homework. Then we got to our lesson or gig only to have it fall apart before our very eyes and ears. How could this happen? We played it "perfectly at home"and we felt "at home"with the music.

The key word here is "home." It's one thing to practice and play something perfectly at home, and it's another to create the same degree of musical fluency and confidence when playing for others (even for your teacher, whom you know is on your side and who should be truly invested in your success and fulfillment). Playing for others is an exceptional act in our society, especially playing solo. How can we better prepare ourselves for performing so we're no longer negatively influenced by the situation?

First you acknowledge that practicing by yourself in the comfort and security of your own home is significantly different from playing for another person, no matter who that person is. With this realization comes the need for at least two distinct and unique kinds of practice, each demanding a different kind of attention and focus, and each being essential to success.

Music, as we know, is an emotional expression. It moves us, heightens our experience, and even alters our respiration and heart rate. We play for others to share the excitement, warmth, and joy of our music. We put our feelings into the music to convey it, letting ourselves go so we can have the freedom to express ourselves. When we get to that point, we're "in the flow,"and there's less of a distinction between ourselves and the music. The dulcimer seems like an extension of ourselves rather than a separate entity. We become one with the instrument and enjoy the music as though we're listening to someone else.

But how do we get to this point? The first step is the most basic, the technical level of practice. This is where we approach the music with objectivity, where the goal is to learn the mechanics of every single note and every nuance (dynamics, phrasing, tempo variations, etc.). This is when mountain dulcimer players answer their questions about fingering and strumming or fingerpicking; this is when hammered dulcimer players answer their questions about bridge placement and handedness. Mark up your music (use a pencil that has a good eraser) with fingering designations, R's and L's and bridge markings and explore all of your options to come up with the easiest and best way to play this particular piece of music.

Past articles in this column have lots

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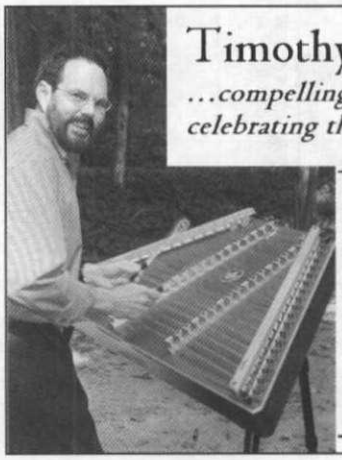
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of ideas about effective practice, and I'll just mention one of the most important ones here—chunking. Practice is best when done in chunks. A chunk is a piece of the piece you're learning, a small bit that has a discernible beginning and ending. A chunk is usually a phrase which feels like a complete musical idea. In fiddle tunes and much of traditional music, phrases or chunks are usually two, four or eight measures long. When learning a new piece or practicing it for mastery, four measures is usually the standard chunk. More than four measures can start to become cumbersome, and fewer than four can be meaningless, unless the music is really difficult.

The important thing is to practice without emotion; just learn what you must learn in order to play the music. Practice slowly so you can accurately and efficiently track what you're doing. Often we think we've practiced something to the point of knowing it, but our need to move on prevents us from being more objective and from listening to ourselves critically. Experts indicate that when you can play a chunk or phrase three times in a row with no mistakes you're on the way.

You can memorize the music at this point. Once you've learned a chunk, play it without looking at the music. Three times without mistakes and you've really learned something. This kind of practice takes great patience, and is a wise investment of your time and energy.

As you become more comfortable with the music, you can slowly bring it up to speed. Your goal at this point is to play the entire piece through from beginning to end without mistakes or hesitation. Mistakes and hesitations should be heard as calls for help; red flags that say "practice me some more—please!" Now it's time to change your focus to phase 2: preparing for performance.

Playing for others, especially in a performance, alters our approach to the music. Memory can be affected, muscles more constricted, and we can be more tense and self-conscious. All of these factors make it more difficult to play the music we know so well since our ability to relax might be altered. Therefore, it's a good idea to practice performing before you perform.

Play for anyone (family members, neighbors, mailman) who will sit and listen. (A student of mine recently had her family simulate a performance situation by making a lot of noise while she practiced. I suggested that she practice having them listen intently to her since this would be more distracting.) Play to a tape recorder and listen for your own feedback. Put a picture of an individual or a group in front of you while you play. Play for a pet. Set up chairs and imagine that your audience is there with you. Do anything to get your heart racing a bit faster so that you begin to simulate the excitement of an actual performance. When you're ready, play in a nursing home, hospital, hospice, school or restaurant. When you finally perform for the first time, you will already have done so, and you'll be much better prepared.

We've discussed two levels of practice: 1) Objective and repetitive practice to learn the essential mechanics of the music, and 2) Performance practice, up to speed, to get comfortable playing in front of others. All of your questions should have been answered and fully worked out in phase 1 so that you can focus on your performance instead of worrying about getting through a certain part of the music. Phase 2 enables you to put your learning to the test.

Please write to me at performance@steveschneider.com to let me know how you're doing with your performing or your practice. I'd love to hear from you (but only after you've practiced). Be well, and stay in tune.

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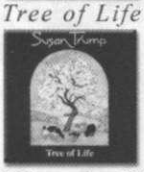

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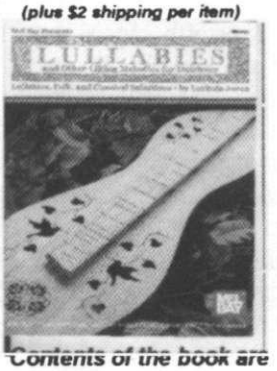

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Mountain Dulcimer Tales & Traditions

by Ralph Lee Smith

John D. Tignor: Old-Time Kentucky Dulcimer Maker

I recently received the following email from Claudia Lowery of Waskom, Texas:

Hello, I have an old dulcimer that a friend gave me 30 years ago. Today I took it in to be repaired and the old gentleman could see the remnants of a paper label inside and all he could make out was (he thinks it said) T.D. Tignor made in ___ort, Kentucky. He dated it to pre-World War 2. I looked at my atlas and saw Frankfort KY. I would appreciate any information on this dulcimer or the maker... Please let me know if there is any history about this dulcimer maker or maybe someone else might know something.

I replied as follows:

Your instrument was made by John D. Tignor of Frankfort, Kentucky, the last in the direct line of old-style Kentucky dulcimer makers. My book, *The Story of the Dulcimer,* published in 1986 and now out of print, contains a photo of John, a picture of one of his instruments, and the following paragraph in the text:

"In the late 1930s, [Jethro Amburgey] had in his shop class at Hindman Settlement School, a young mountain boy named John D. Tignor, who was born in 1922. At Hindman, Tignor learned to make dulcimers from Amburgey, and in the 1950s he began to produce instruments. He adopted trefoil soundholes and pegs with square flanges, but maintained the traditional Cumberland body design... In the early 1970s, yielding to the commercial realities of the times, he widened and deepened his soundbox and fretted his instruments all the way across the fretboard with commercial instrument fretwire...When he died in 1982, the direct Cumberland tradition finally passed into history."

Tignor dulcimers made prior to about 1970 have the basic features of traditional Kentucky dulcimers as made by James Thomas (1850–1933) and Jethro Amburgey (1895–1971) (See my book, *Appalachian Dulcimer Traditions,* pp. 83–95.) These include:

- a narrow, low body and narrow fretboard, with 28-inch vibrating string span;
- top and bottom that overlap the sides;
- wire-staple frets extending only partway across the fretboard; and
- nut and bridge cut in such a fashion as to move the middle string closer to the bass than the melody string.

Typically, the dulcimers have a typed label inside the lower right or left soundhole, reading, Made By/John D. Tignor/ Frankfort, Ky 40601. They are not hand-signed or dated.

The instruments differ from Thomas/Amburgey dulcimers in two particulars: use of trefoil soundholes rather than round holes or hearts; and use of pegs with square rather than rounded flanges, on instruments that do not have commercial violin pegs.

Figure 1 shows the heads of two handsome pre-1970 Tignor dulcimers in the collection of Josie Wiseman of Crestwood, Kentucky, and Figure 2 shows the instruments at full length. One is fitted with Tignor's homemade square-flange pegs, and one is fitted with commercial violin pegs. The grace and beauty of these instruments, reflecting a century of Kentucky dulcimer tradition in virtually pure form, needs no comment.

The bottom instrument in Figure 3 has the same old-time Kentucky body as the two instruments in Figure 1, but its wider fretboard is fretted all the way across with commercial musical instrument fretwire. Here the transition to "modernism" has begun.

In the instrument at top, made about 1975, John has completed the transition. In addition to the wider fretboard that is fretted all the way across with commercial fretwire, the dulcimer's features include a higher, larger body and larger head, and elimination of the top-and-bottom-overlap. John made this type of dulcimer until his death in 1982.

All Tignor dulcimers are nice instruments for strumming, and instruments of his final style have enough volume for picking, more or less! None is a modern instrument; all of it is history.

Claudia tells me that she is playing her Tignor dulcimer, both for her own enjoyment and in performances, and is explaining it to audiences. Congratulations, Claudia! John would be happy!

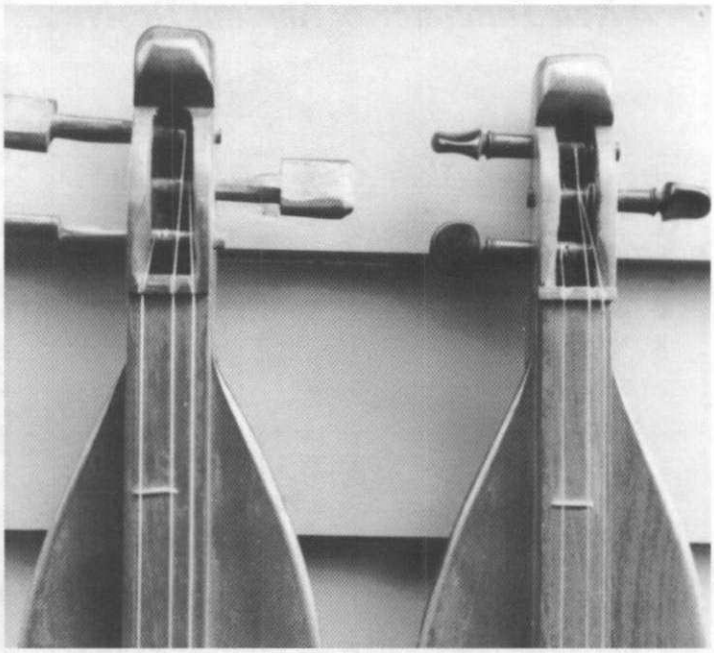


Figure 1: Heads of two Tignor dulcimers in the collection of Josie Wiseman, Crestwood, Kentucky.

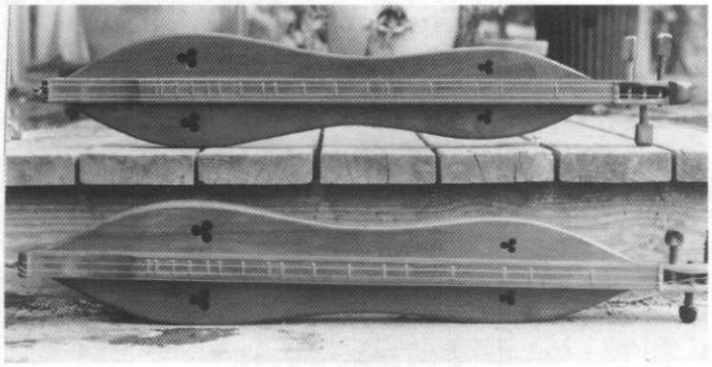


Figure 2. The same dulcimers, shown at full-length.

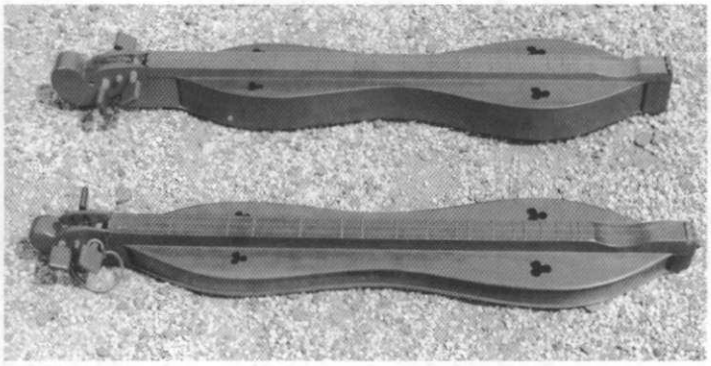
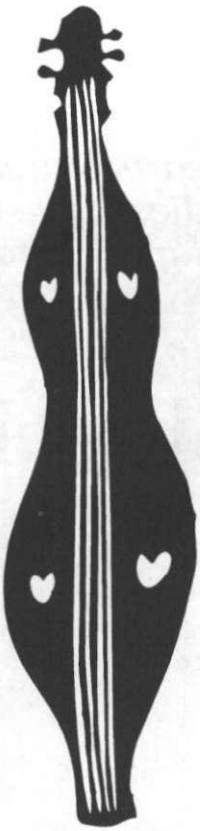


Figure 3. Top: Dulcimer made by John D. Tignor, c. 1975; Bottom: Dulcimer made by John D. Tignor, c. 1970.



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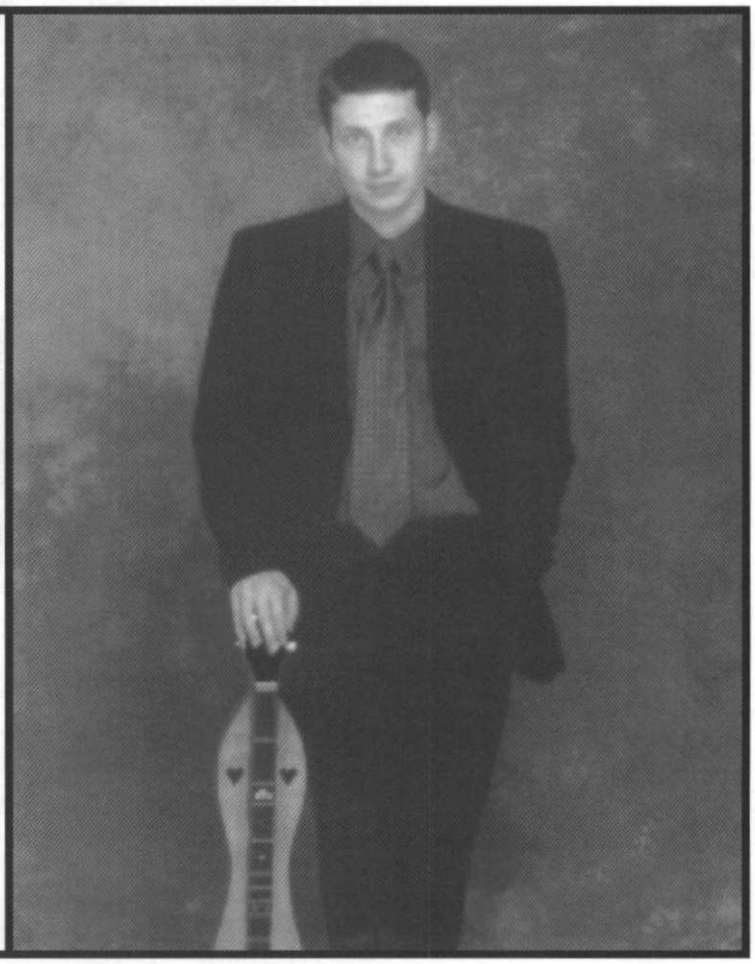

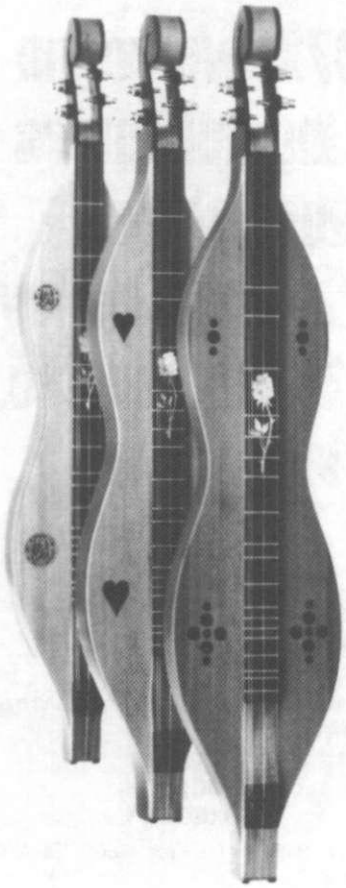

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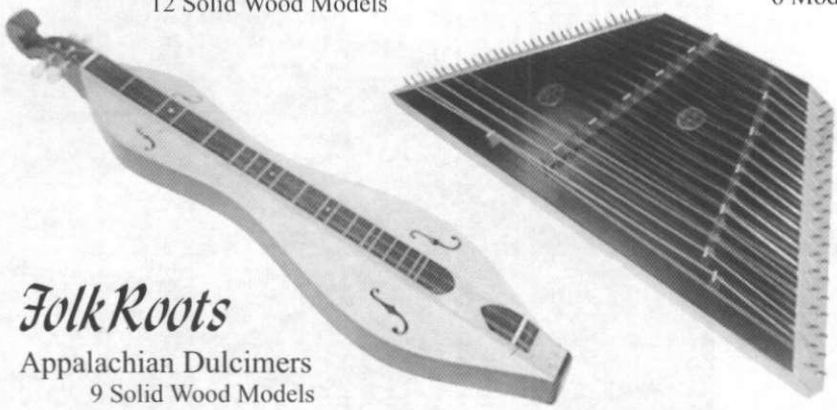

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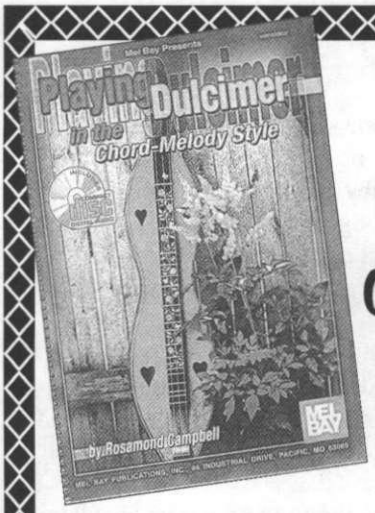

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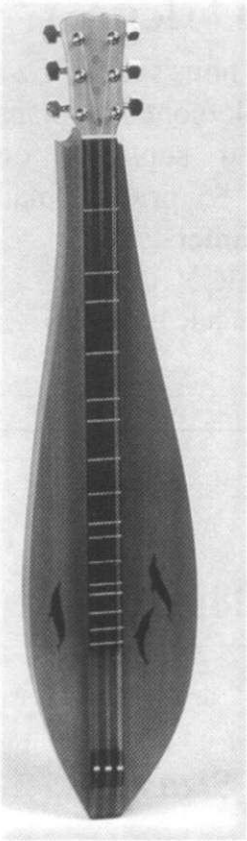

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The Music Archives

Sam Rizzetta

Lullaby

This is an easy and gentle waltz that plays on a back and forth change of harmony on nearly every measure. Although easy to play on hammer dulcimer, the simplicity provides a peaceful, restful quality. The chord changes allow plenty of opportunities to add and invent your own accompaniment and ornamentation.

On the fretted dulcimer I play "Lullaby" fingerstyle with four equi-distant strings, tuned down to G' G' D G, high to low, for the key of G. The first part may be played low or high in this tuning. Notice the C# harmony note in measure 6. When the melody is played high, and a 6-1/2 fret is available, the C# can be played on the D string for a nice harmony. When I play an octave lower, I omit the C#. The second part, after the repeat sign, is played low. Try other G tunings or set it in a key that suits your dulcimer.

While teaching at the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins, West Virginia, I sometimes got up early to compose a simple melody for students to arrange during the morning class. Later that day they performed their individual versions. It was always fun to hear how each person's approach was different and valid and wonderful. This, of course, was the lesson.

After our performances, one student phoned home to tell his young daughter that he wrote his arrangement just for her and named it "Rachel's Lullaby." We were all touched by this, and ever since I have thought of the tune as a lullaby. Although my original Augusta early-morning version is printed here, I usually call the tune "Rachel's Lullaby."

Jaybird

Jaybird is another great old-time tune that I don't hear much anymore. I've heard versions from Maine to Georgia and played it for countless square dances in the 1960s and 1970s.

The first version is as I play the tune on hammer dulcimer. The other is designed for fretted dulcimer, using a basic Ionian tuning of A A D, high to low. I use a noter to play the tune at dance or jam session tempo. The second part of the tune is played in a high range so all of the melody can be played with a noter on the A string. Please note: measures 7 and 8, and 15 and 16 are written an octave lower in order to avoid lots of ledger lines above the staff.

I've written the fretted dulcimer melody a little simpler with fewer notes. I often rely on rapid strumming and gliding the noter up and down the fret board to fill out the melody with ornamentation unique to noter-style dulcimer. The written notes are a basic melody; the strum and sliding noter do the rest. This gives the music a special dulcimer quality,

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rather than copying what the fiddles, banjos or hammer dulcimers are doing.

June Apple

"June Apple" is a tune in the mixolydian mode. Tunes in this mode are usually what musicians are talking about when they refer to tunes as modal. "Old Joe Clark" is perhaps the most well-known example. Mixolydian sounds mostly like a major scale but is characterized by having a flatted seventh. Thus, a mixolydian scale would sound: do, re, me, fa, sol, la, ti-flat, do.

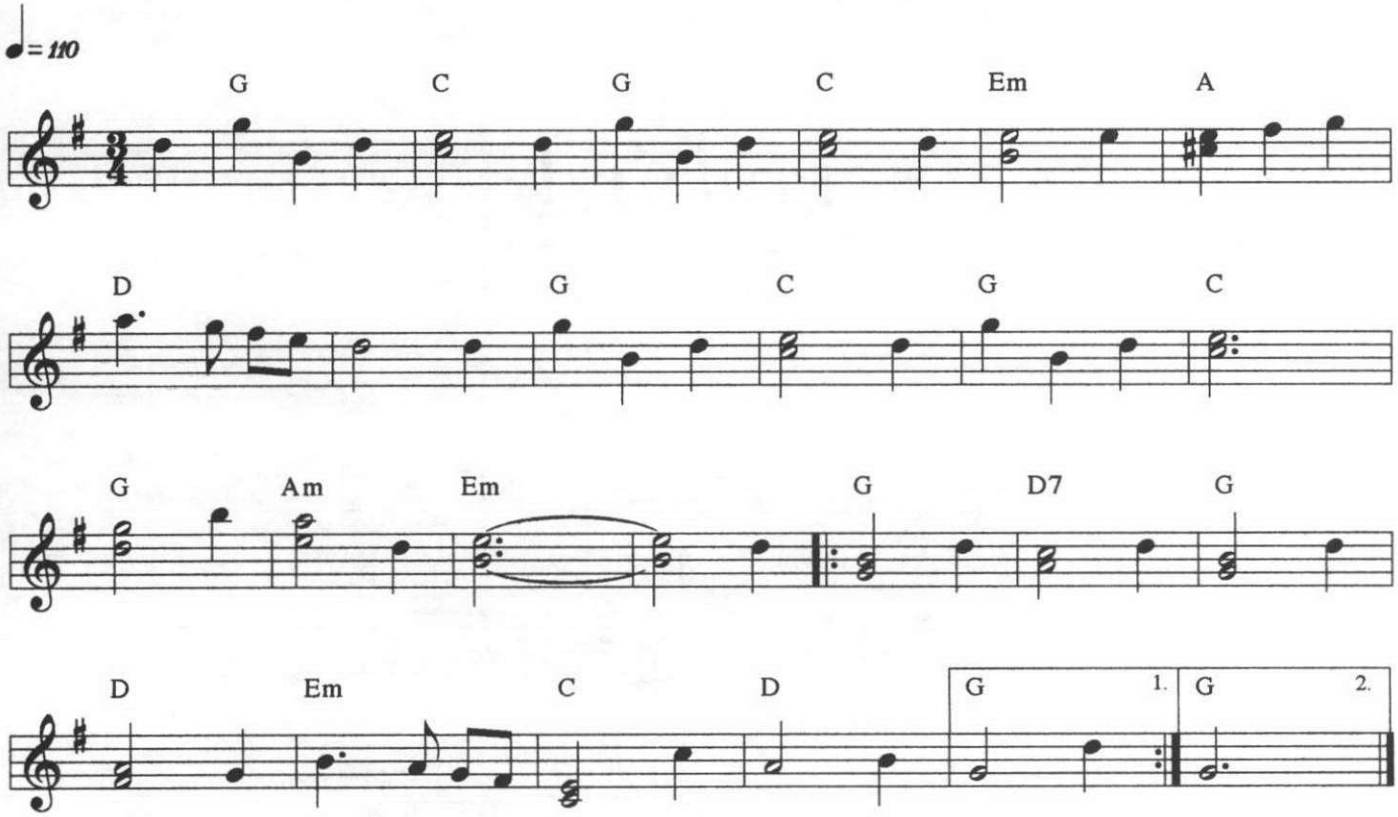
Although June Apple is in the key of A, the seventh (ti-flat) of its mixolydian scale is C-natural instead of the usual major scale C#. The key signature shows two sharps, but the home chord is A.

To play A-mixolydian on fretted dulcimer I tune A A E, high to low. The scale starts on the open A string. Where the melody falls below the open-string A, as in measures 7 and 8, and 16 and 17, I play an octave higher. This is another good tune for pick and noter. If the tempo has to be very fast, I simplify the melody and rely on the strumming and sliding noter to provide musical color.

Yours tunefully,
Sam Rizzetta

Lullaby

Sam Rizzetta © 1988

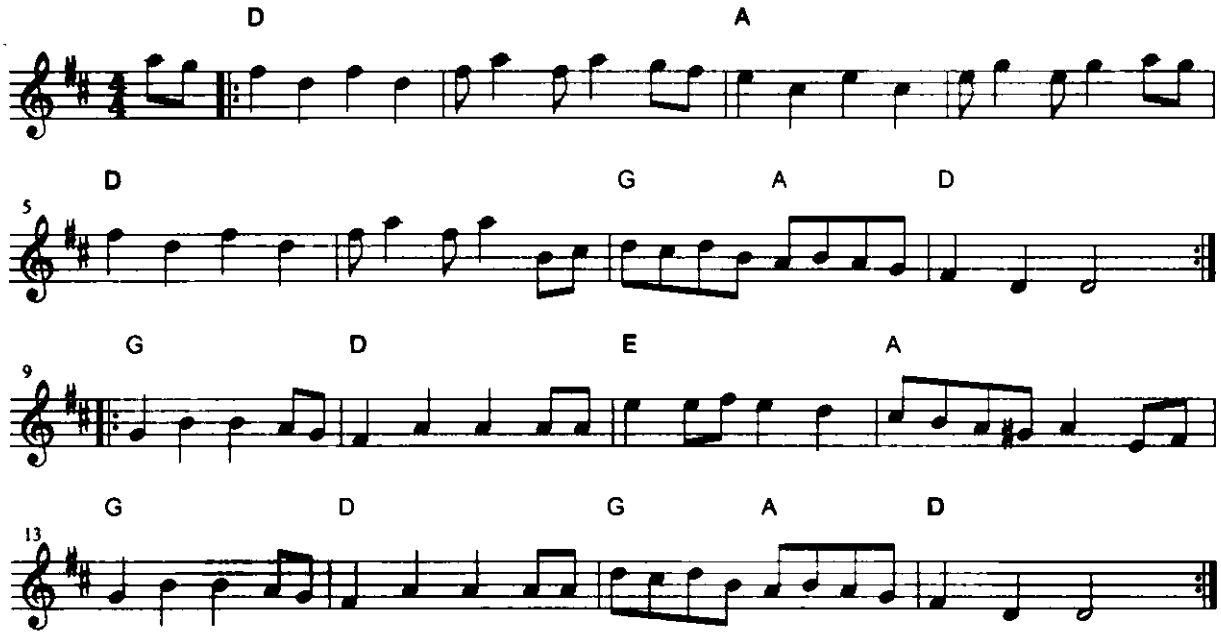


Music follows on next page.

Jaybird

A lively reel

Traditional

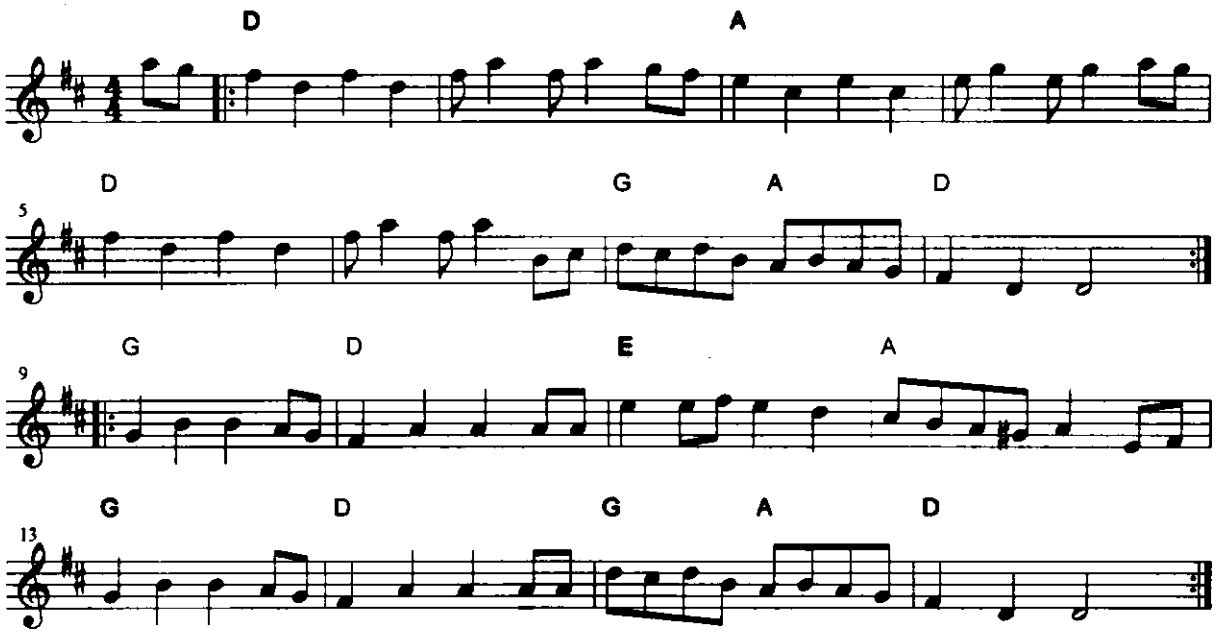


Jaybird

Fretted Dulcimer Version

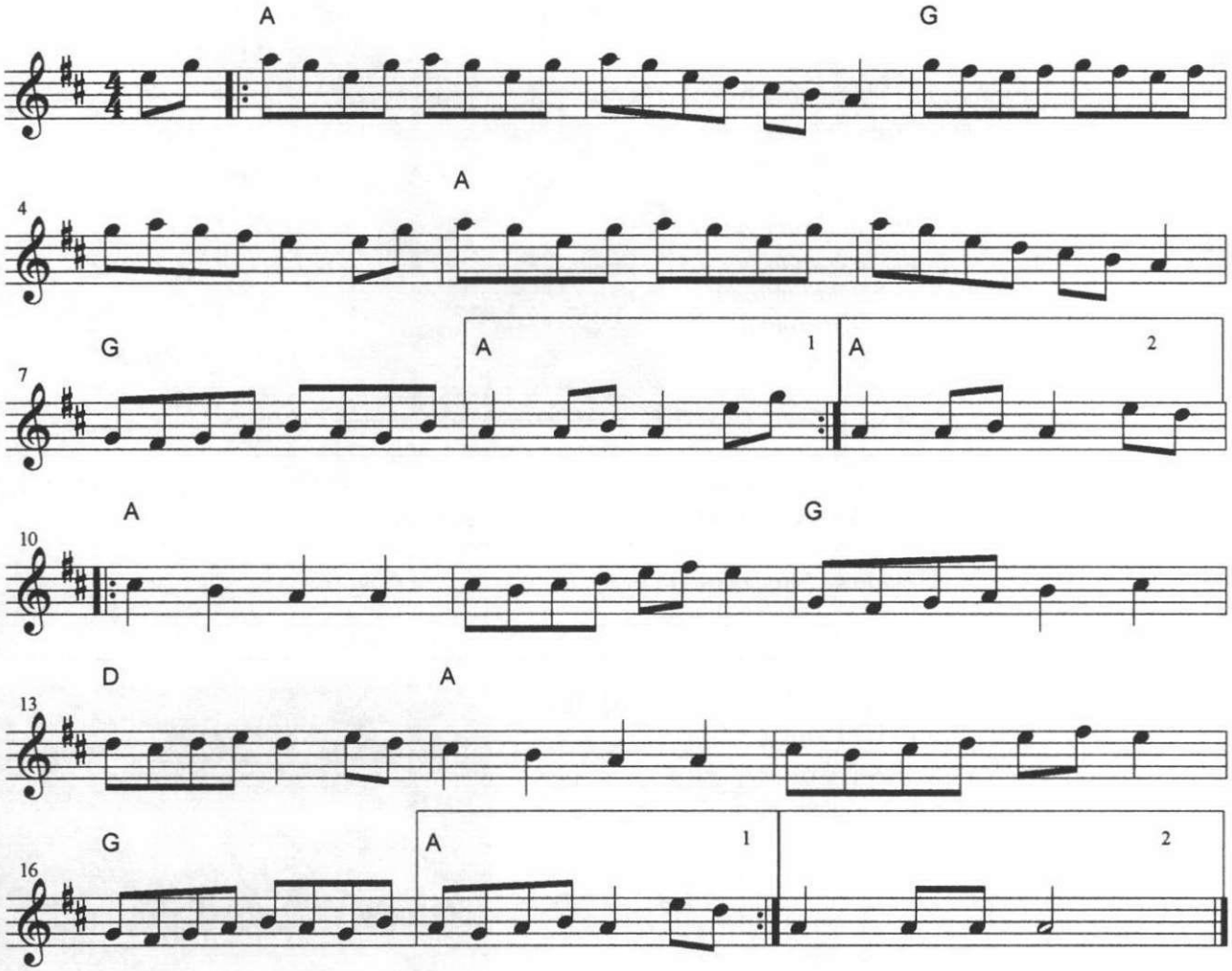
A lively reel

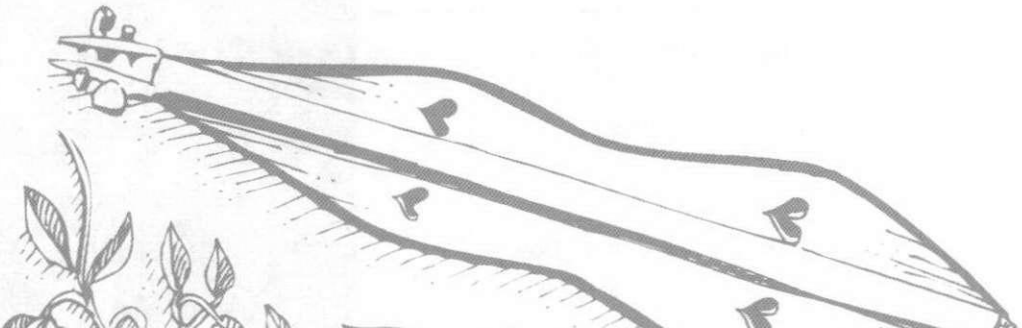
Traditional



June Apple

Traditional





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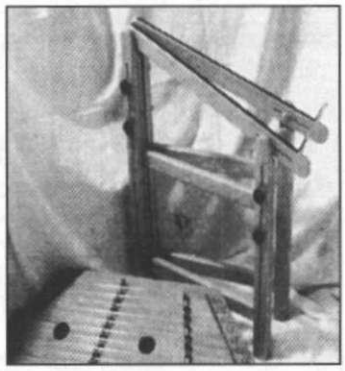

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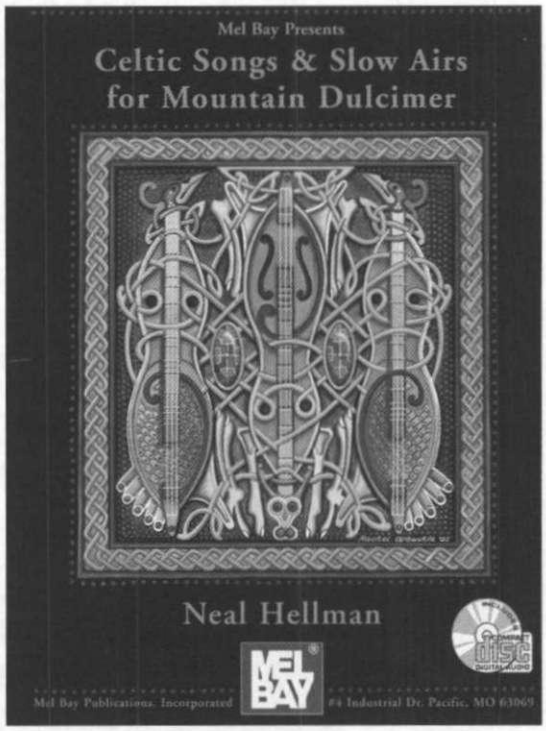

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Finally • *Rini Twait, 303-776-5885, rtwait@graphicaljazz.com (CD)*

Rini is from Colorado where she works as a graphic designer and plays both mountain and hammered dulcimers very well. Her first album was recorded with the able support of Michael Bellmont on guitar, and Rob and Lin Chirico on guitar, accordion and the occasional bodhran. Rini plays electric dulcimer on four of the twelve cuts and does all the vocals. Tunes range from originals by Michael to traditional and contemporary favorites like Shenandoah, Lady Mary, Summertime, Geordie and My Funny Valentine.

Jammin' Up a Storm • *Peggy Carter, 16142 Hexham Drive, Spring, TX 77379, 281-370-9495, SAMFest97@aol.com, www.peggycarter.com (Book)*

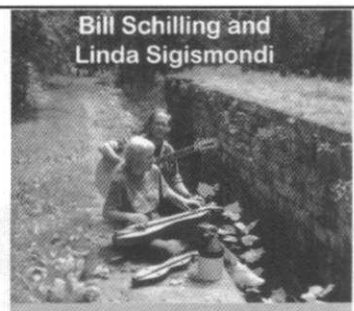
Those of you searching for a handy book to learn all those hot tunes you're hearing at the weekly jam need Peggy's new book of mountain dulcimer arrangements of some sixty common jam tunes. Tunes are arranged by skill level. Tunings include D-A-D, D-A-A, and D-G-D and use of the capo is required. Hammered dulcimer and fiddle players will find this book useful as well, as all of the tunes are presented in standard notation in addition to dulcimer tablature. Tunes include Amazing Grace, Angelina Baker, Black Mountain Rag, Cherokee Shuffle, Gray Cat, John Ryan's Polka.

Pretty As the Moon • *Janice Steinbeck, 809 Quail Road, Marlton, NJ 08053, jannasong@aol.com (Book)*

Janice's book is "a collection of music bridging generations and cultures" and is arranged in standard notation and tablature for the mountain dulcimer. It is arranged in three major musical sections: Part I contains Appalachian fiddle tunes (Barb'ry Allen, Camp Run) from West Virginia and elsewhere. Part II addresses contemporary classics and songs for the winter holiday season (Ain't Misbehavin', Let It Snow). Part III contains popular traditional and contemporary Yiddish and Hebrew songs (An Orem Yesoimele, Tumbalalayka). Part IV includes recipes for Jewish delicacies such as potato latkes and borscht and Part V is a brief list of common Yiddish words. For example, I found out that a doofus is either a *klutz* or a *schlemiel.* Janice has done a good job of integrating the whole *megilla.*

At the Fair • *Sam Stone, 808 Castetter Road, Henryville, IN, 47126, 812-294-1719, samhenry@thepoint.net (CD)*

Sam Stone is known as the "Bard of Henryville, Indiana" for good reason; he has just released another great album of original material. He plays mountain dulcimer and sings with support from Dave Para and Cathy Barton, David and Maria Crecilius, Lorinda Jones, and Doofus (John & Heidi Cerrigione and Neal & Coleen Walters). Sam has a knack of writing immensely singable songs with simple but profound messages. He sings them with warmth and sincerity. Sellections include Waiting for the Belle, and Down Winchester Road.



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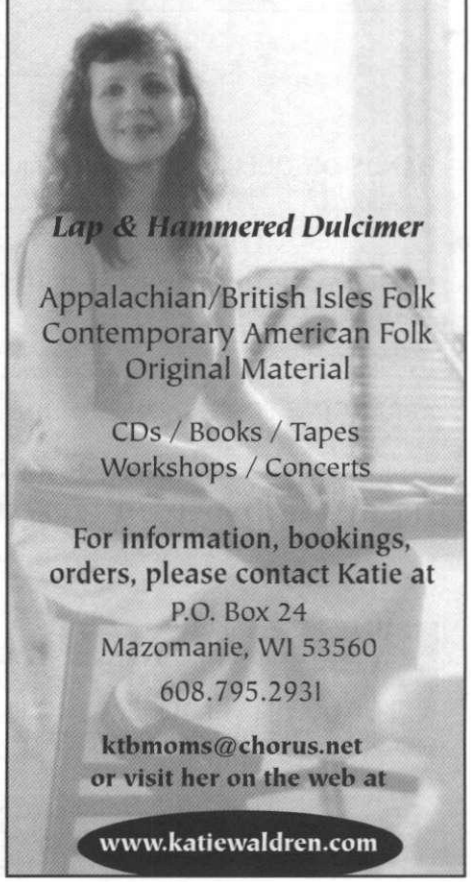

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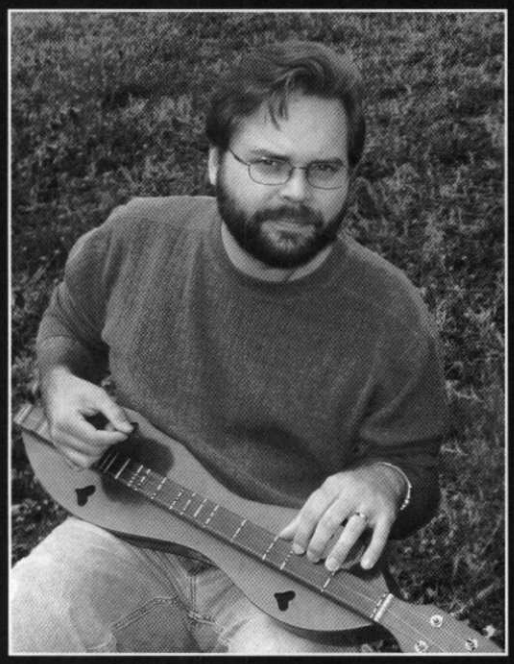

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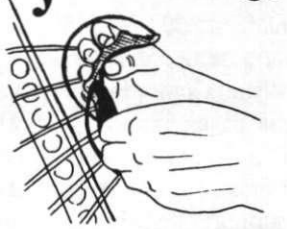

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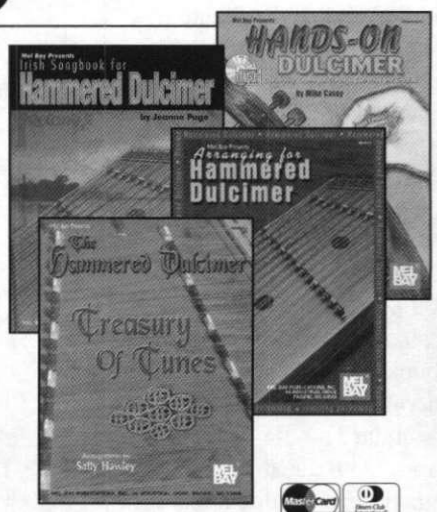

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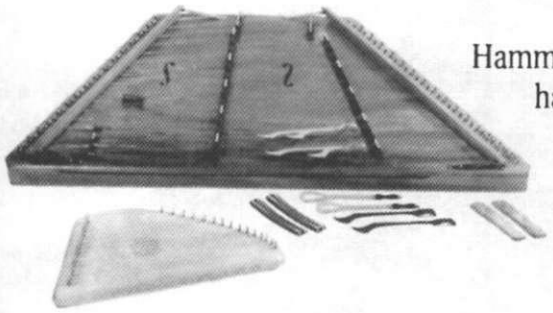

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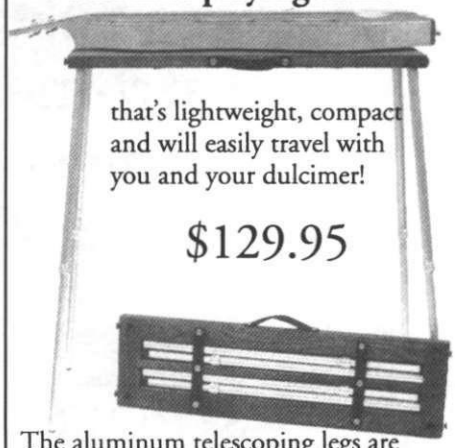

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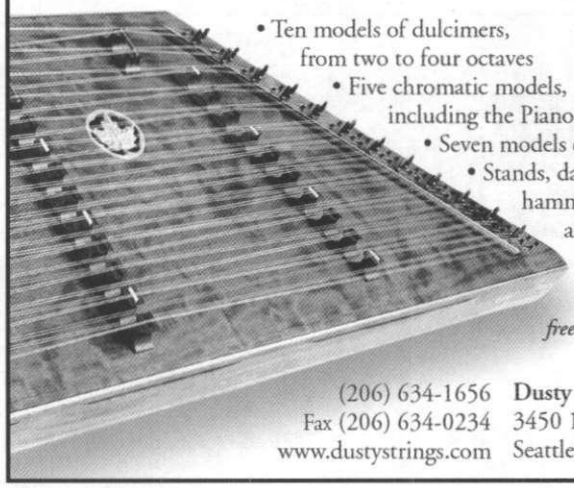

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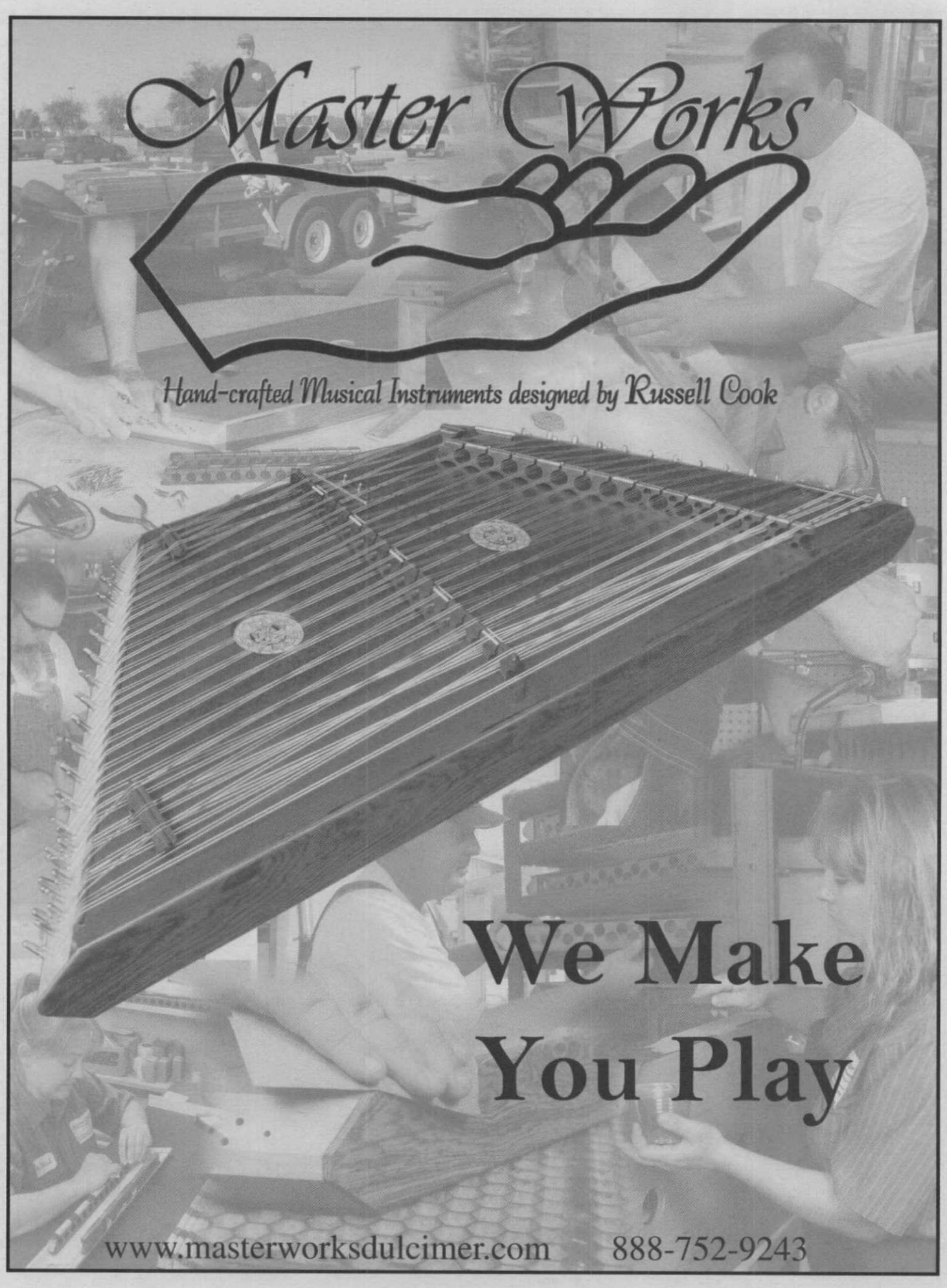
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Advertiser Index

Accessories

BB Hammers 42
Cliff's Custom Crafts 40
Colorado Case Company 34
Glee Circus Music 48
Laser Elegance Engraving 33
Main Street Case Company 50
String Fever Music 22
Thistledew Acres 8

Books

Anna Barry 49
Bill Schilling & Linda Sigismondi 47
Carey Dubbert 25
Congergation Music 22
Dan Evans Music 31
Debbie Porter 36
Doug Felt 23
Doug Thomson 33
Dulcimer Music Online 17
Gourd Music 46
Guy George 32
Heidi Muller 22
Helen Johnson 23
Jennifer Ranger 37
Katie Waldren 47
Ken Kolodner 37
Linda Brockinton 33
Lorinda Jones 37
Madeline MacNeil 35
Maggie's Music 32
Maiden Creek Dulcimers 41
Maureen Sellers 16
Mel Bay Publications 48
Missigman Music 47
Molly McCormack 49
Off-The-Wall Dulcimer Society 7
Owl Mountain Music 51
Peggy Carter ....Inside back
Rick Thum 49
Roots & Branches Music ....Insert
Rosamond Campbell 41
Russ Howe & Ed Sinclair .... Inside back
Scott Odena 23
Shelley Stevens 31
Stephen Seifert 48
Sue Carpenter 49
Susan Trump 36
Timothy Seaman 34

Festivals

2nd Annual Colorado Dulcimer Festival 9
4th Annual Celtic Cafe 4
7th Annual Workshop 16
Augusta Heritage Center 18
Blue River Folk Music Festival 8
Central Ohio Folk Festival 7
Chestnut Ridge Dulcimer Festival 2
CWA Congress, Beijing, China 4
Dulcimer At Eight Gables Inn 14
Dulci-More Festival 3
Fiesta Dulcimer Festival 14
Folk Music At Weatherbury Farm 3
Great River Road Festival 5
Hammer On! 3
Heritage Dulcimer Camp 11
Jubilee of Acoustic Music 8
Kentucky Music Week 15
Lagniappe Dulcimer Fete 8
Moons & Tunes 4
Mountain Dulcimer Music Fest 4
National Trail Dulcimer Festival 14
Northeast Dulcimer Symposium 2
Northern Lights Hammered Dulcimer Retreat 16
Old Tyme Music Festival ....Inside back
Ozark Folk Center 9
PattyFest 7
Shady Grove Dulcimer Camp 5
Spring Fling Rendezvous 2005 13
The Swannanoa Gathering 12
Upper Potomac Fall Dulcimer Festival 11
Western Carolina Mountain Dulcimer Week 10
Winston-Salem Dulcimer Festival 13

Instruments

Backyard Music 40
Bear Branch Dulcimers 35
Black Mountain Instruments 39
Blue Lion Musical Instruments 40
Coog Instruments 50
David's Dulcimers ....Back cover
Dusty Strings 50
Folk Notes Instruments 31
Folkcraft Instruments 36, 40, 49
Gila Mountain Dulcimers 7
Harps on Main 31
Jeremy Seeger Dulcimers 41
John Kovac 7
Keith Young ....42, inside back
Mike Huddleson Stringed Instruments 33
Modern Mountain Dulcimer 21, 23, 25
Rick Thum Dulcimers 25
Ron Ewing Dulcimers 16
Songbird Dulcimers 37
Whamdiddle 49
Windy River Dulcimers 50
Wood' N Strings ....Insert

Services

Music for Healing & Transition 33

Shops

Dulcimer Shoppe, Inc. 39
Elderly Instruments 34
Family Tree Music 32
Folk Notes 50
Mountain Music Shoppe 32
Mountain Made Music ....Back cover
Music Folk Inc. 23
Musicmaker's Kits 22
Prussia Valley Dulcimers 36
Silver Chords Dulcimer & Gift Shop 25
Simple Sounds 46
Stewart MacDonald's Guitar Shop Supplies 42
Sweet Sounds Dulcimer House 49

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Modern Mountain Dulcimer would like to take this opportunity to recognize all of the dedication, hard work, and talent, that was displayed this year by all of the contestants in the MD contest at Winfield. We are especially proud of National Champion Erin Rogers, and Finalist Aaron O'Rourke! There is still time for members of the MMD Family of players to register for the MMD Family Gathering April 17-25, 2005. It will be a most excellent jam, a perfect way to demonstrate and/or improve your playing skills! This is a one time only event. It is free, but you must register to attend! Complete information is available on the FAMILY GATHERING page of our web site. As always we want to invite you to visit our web site modernmountaindulcimer.com to learn more about our high performance mountain dulcimers or call David McKinney at 870-251-3665 to place a order, ask a question, or arrange a visit to the place where they are created, Batesville, AR. Stay in tune!

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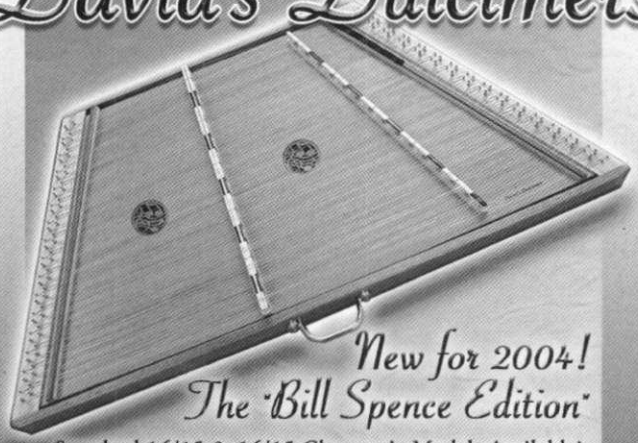

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